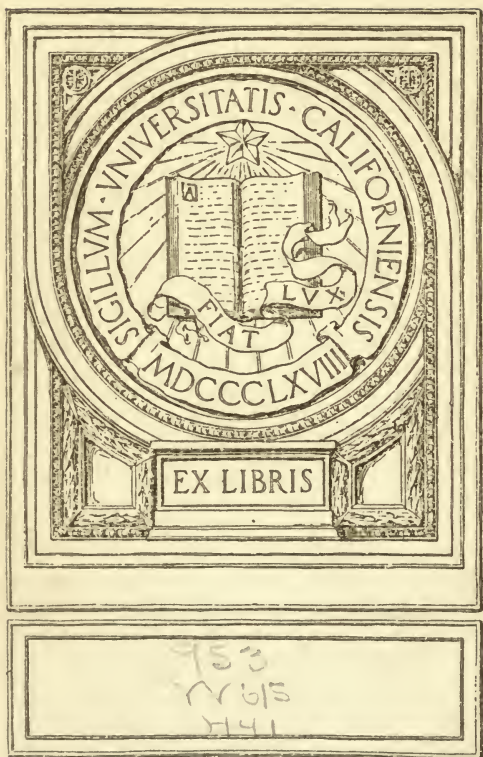


W A L T
W H I T M A N
By WILL HAYES





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WALT WHITMAN

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The Prophet of the New Era

BY

WILL HAYES

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WALT WHITMAN

CHAPTER I

THE CHRIST OF OUR AGE

“Watch ye therefore : for ye know not when the master of the house cometh.”—*Mark* xiii. 35.

THE world has not yet realised the true significance of many of the words of the prophets and seers. There is always the same pitiable attempt to express the infinite in the finite—to narrow down the all-enclosing until it can be enclosed. Perhaps there are advantages in this failing on the part of mankind. Many would be blinded by the full light were it suddenly to appear before them ; the kindly glimmer of the candle prepares them for the dazzling brightness of the arc lamp. But it has its disadvantages too. There is a world of beauty missed by those who still retain the candle—a beauty hidden amongst the shadows—that can only be brought to light by the full glare which takes in and illuminates every single nook and cranny.

To those who take the world view, the real

landmarks of history are the names which stand out like beacon lights throughout all past ages—not one solitary light and all the rest darkness, but many rays and shafts linking up with each other—handing on the light until the world becomes brighter and brighter with the passing of time. This is the secret of progress, and the secret, too, of that eternal hope in the breast of man that somewhere ahead lies the New Era. There always is, and always has been, a New Era in prospect, and men are guided towards that Utopia by the prophets. They fail to find it only because they do not realise the true meaning of the prophets' words.

Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, Christ, Mohammed, and many others have come and gone. All brought the same great message, and all shared the same fate. They were misunderstood, persecuted, slandered, and later, when men half-grasped their meaning, they were lauded, worshipped, and even deified. But they were almost as much wronged by the worship as by the persecution. The man who decks a guide-post with ribbons is not much better than the man who smears it with mud. There is only one way in which to make real use of a guide-post or even to honour it, and that is to go along the path to which its arm is

pointing. The prophets of the past were all guide-posts pointing the way to the New World, but they have been so befouled with mud and decked with ornaments that it is now difficult for the wayfaring man to discover in what direction they would have him go. But what of their successors? Are there not other men who have not yet been subjected to the blighting influence of worship? May we not find in our own age a guide-post which will show us the way to the New Era if only we clear away a little mud?

Has our age produced a Christ—a Buddha? Has it given us a new Bible? These are important questions. At the present time, more than ever before, men and women need guidance. Why go back to disputed writings, to personalities around whom so much controversy has raged that their message has lost much of its true meaning and power, if in our own time we can find the guidance we seek? And I believe we can. I believe that in Walt Whitman we have the Prophet of the New Era, and that in his *Leaves of Grass* we have a book that will one day become a Bible to many seekers after light.

“Is the house shut? is the master away?”

Nevertheless, be ready, be not weary of watching,
He will soon return, his messengers come anon.”

So does Whitman pass on the warning message of the prophets. He understands. He can rise to the heights reached by the great ones, and by that rising he proves that he is one of their number. Putting himself in the place of the despised and rejected messengers, he uses words which can be applied to them all—and to himself.

“ All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself,
Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and crucified, and many times shall be again,
All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and sisters' sake, for the soul's sake,
Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or poor, with the kiss of affection,
For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope and all-enclosing charity,
With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane words, mine only,
Young and strong I pass, knowing well I am destin'd myself to an early death ;
But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not, neither early nor late,
And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never dies.”

We are more fortunate than we imagined. There is not one loving Christ but many, not one gentle Buddha only. The world is rich in Christs and Buddhas. They belong to all

countries and to both sexes, these men and women whose kiss of affection sweetens our lives, these cheer-bringing Gods whose all-enclosing charity is the greatest thing in the world. Many are nameless. They go down to posterity only in lives made brighter by their presence. They are remembered as a beautiful face is remembered, or as a sunset sky is remembered, as something that has raised one a little higher in the scale of being. Such was the woman Whitman's mother told him of. She was known by the name of the Peacemaker, and lived on Long Island. "She was well toward eighty years old, of happy and sunny temperament, had always lived on a farm, and was very neighbourly, sensible, discreet, an invariable and welcomed favourite, especially with young married women. She had numerous children and grandchildren. She was uneducated, but possessed a native dignity. She had come to be the tacitly agreed upon domestic regulator, judge, settler of difficulties, shepherdess, and reconciler in the land." Of such stuff are the great ones made, those for whom the world is always waiting. For

"All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;
A strong being is the proof of the race and of the
ability of the universe,

When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,
The dispute on the soul stops,
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd
back, or laid away."

The great one is concerned with the things that matter, the eternal truths behind things seeming. He has counted the cost. He knows that he will be misunderstood if he endeavours to turn men's minds from the trivial and the passing to the great and the permanent. He knows what is the reward of all Beginners—those who try to lay the foundations of the New Era. He knows

"How they are provided for upon the earth (appearing at intervals),
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth,
How they inure to themselves as much as to any—
what a paradox appears their age,
How people respond to them, yet know them not,
How there is something relentless in their fate all times,
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward,
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same great purchase."

There is in *Leaves of Grass* always this recognition of the work (and the fate) of those who have gone before. Soaring above his fellows, the Prophet joins hands with those who are

ever his equals. He takes up the task where they resigned it. He carries forward the work they have begun. Whitman is always eager to acknowledge this debt to the past.

“ After all, not to create only, or found only,
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already
founded,
To give it our own identity, average, limitless,
free,
To fill the gross, the torpid bulk with vital religious
fire,
Not to repel or destroy so much as to accept, fuse,
rehabilitate,
To obey as well as command, to follow more than
to lead,
These also are the lessons of our New World ;
While how little the New after all, how much the
Old, Old World ! ”

The Old World has witnessed the coming of many new religions, but in essence they have all been the same, for there is but one religion. And the faith of the New World will again be the same one faith. This religion is the one thing needful ; it is the pearl of great price which to purchase a man will sell all that he has. And thus the Prophet speaks of it :

“ I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a religion. . . .

“ Each is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky
are for religion’s sake.

“ I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,
None has ever yet adored or worship’d half enough,
None has begun to think how divine he himself is,
and how certain the future is. . . .

“ Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a
greater religion,
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

“ My comrade !
For you to share with me two greatneses, and a
• third one rising inclusive and more resplendent,
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the
greatness of Religion.”

Here is no thing of creeds and dogmas. Here is no stupefying list of “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt nots.” Such language could not be used of a finally closed catalogue of articles of belief. The old, but ever new, religion preached by Whitman is one which can never be put into rites and ceremonies. It can never be used as a secret door to admit the favoured few to their little selfish heaven, or as a pitchfork to push down the many into a teeming hell of fire. To Whitman the Devil is dead, the fires of hell are extinguished, and the forces of

good are slowly but surely working for the salvation of all.

What, then, is the religion of which Walt Whitman speaks? Let the Prophet answer for himself, in words addressed "To Him that was Crucified":

"My spirit to yours, dear brother,
Do not mind because many sounding your name do
not understand you,
I do not sound your name, but I understand you,
I specify you with joy, O my comrade, to salute you,
and to salute those who are with you, before and
since, and those to come also,
That we all labor together transmitting the same
charge and succession,
We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers
of all theologies,
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but
reject not the disputers, nor anything that is
asserted,
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by
divisions, jealousies, recriminations on every side,
They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my
comrade,
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over,
journeying up and down till we make our inefface-
able mark upon time and the diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and
women of races, ages to come, may prove brethren
and lovers as we are."

It is the old, old story: the story that was told by Gautāma Sakya to the dwellers in the valley of the Ganges, that was breathed out by Lao Tsze and Confucius to the millions of China, and that found utterance in the sweet words of the Galilean. All transmitted "the same charge and succession." Underlying all their words and deeds is this one idea, that only love and brotherhood can bring the New World into being. Men and women must be saturated with a spirit of intense and loving comradeship. There must be a personal and passionate attachment of man to man, of woman to woman—and of man to woman. For here is something which transcends sex and bridges all gulfs which separate one from another.

With the spirit of comradeship abroad amongst men and women the world becomes one. Caste fades away. Creeds become of no account. Nationality is no longer a barrier. Colour is only on the surface. Sex is a mere accident of birth. The true comrade is the friend of all.

"He has the pass-key of hearts. . . .

"His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more welcome or universal than he is. . . .

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“He says indifferently and alike, ‘How are you,
friend?’ to the President at his levee,
And he says, ‘Good-day, my brother,’ to Cudge
that hoes in the sugar-field,
And both understand him and know that his speech
is right.”

CHAPTER II

THE CARPENTER OF BROOKLYN

“Is not this the carpenter?”—*Mark* vi. 3.

SHALL we ever fully realise how much we owe to our inspired carpenters, tinkers, cobblers, shepherds? Glance back over the world's history and recall the names of men who have come forward from the ranks of the humblest workers with a message of world-wide importance. These names stand out like stars of the first magnitude in the firmament of the past. Amos leaving his sheep on the hills because he has heard a compelling voice within. “The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy.” Jesus forsaking his bench to go forth and preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Bunyan, Boehme and Fox uttering their oracles as it were between the blows of their hammers, and finally abandoning all for the spreading of their message. There is something grand about the stories of how these horny-handed men of the people have made their

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voices heard round the world and their presence felt even in the cushioned palaces of kings.

Such prophets have always brought a certain freshness of outlook along with their message. Unhampered by the conventional learning of their day, they have turned men's minds to fundamentals, and have swept away the dross of littleness that is always gathering around ideas and institutions. Their coming is perhaps part of Nature's never-ceasing efforts to cleanse and purify the earth. It is to this class of elemental men that Walt Whitman, the Prophet of the New Era, belongs. He seems to have known instinctively that some day men would write an account of his life, and he gently chides such prospective biographers for their presumption in thinking they know anything about that life.

“ When I read the book, the biography famous,
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a
man's life ?
And so will some one when I am dead and gone
write my life ?
(As if any man really knew aught of my life,
Why even I myself I often think know little or
nothing of my real life,
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and
indirections
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)”

Many such lives of Whitman have already been written. We are told where he was born, how he dressed, and how he occupied his time. It is not my aim to add another such biography to the list, but rather to build up from his own works the salient features of his life and message.

Walt Whitman was born in the country, "raised by a perfect mother," and all through his life he retained his love for the open air and the natural beauty of the country-side. There is a real heart-throb in his lines :

"O to go back to the place where I was born,
To hear the birds sing once more,
To ramble about the house and barn and over the
fields once more,
And through the orchard and along the old lanes
once more."¹¹

For a time he worked as a farm boy, and it is easy to recognise autobiography in his little picture of harvest-time—so simple yet so true to life.

"The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon,
The clear light plays on the brown, gray and green intertinged,
The armfuls are packed to the sagging mow.

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" I am there, I help, I come stretch'd atop of the load,
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover
and timothy,
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of
wisps."

Later, Whitman lived in the town ; he worked at many trades, mixed with many men ; he became a "lover of populous pavements" ; and all these years great questions were presenting themselves to him. They were the eternal questions which always come to such men, the questions which came to Jesus as he wandered on the hills of Galilee, and to Mohammed on the dusty plains of Arabia. What is man? What is his relation to the universe? What of God? Can man know the Great Author of all things?

" I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan Island, and
bathed in the waters around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within
me,
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they
came upon me,
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my
bed they came upon me."

At the time when the answers came to his questionings, Whitman was working as a car-

penter at Brooklyn. We can almost hear his plane in the line :

“ The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp.”

One story says that it was Whitman's custom to take with him to work in his dinner basket a book, so that he might spend his dinner-hour in reading, and that on a certain day he chose a volume of Emerson's essays for this purpose. They fired his imagination, and gave him the power to speak of those things which had been crowding his thoughts for some years. Probably we shall have to look farther afield for the real inspiration. Emerson's essays may have supplied the match, but the material for the fire had long been building. Whitman had served his apprenticeship in the school of all prophets, the great school of experience. No mere book can give to a man a message such as his. No teacher can convey to a pupil such a grasp of basic principles as we find in *Leaves of Grass*. Prophets are born, not made. They are men who have lived their words in terms of hard practical existence before they have uttered them. They are men who have travelled along a difficult road, and who, finding it leads to the land of their dreams, have

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gone back to tell their fellows of the true way, knowing all the time that they will probably not be believed. But always there is the impelling voice within, urging them on and at the same time giving them "the divine power to speak words." There is doubtless much autobiography in Whitman's remarkable poem called "Vocalism":

"Vocalism, measure, concentration, determination,
and the divine power to speak words ;
Are you full-lung'd and limber-lipp'd from long
trial ? from vigorous practice ? from physique ?
Do you move in these broad lands as broad as they ?
Come duly to the divine power to speak words ?
For only at last after many years, after chastity,
friendship, procreation, prudence, and nakedness,
After treading ground and breasting river and lake,
After a loosen'd throat, after absorbing eras, tem-
peraments, races, after knowledge, freedom,
crimes,
After complete faith, after clarifyings, elevations,
and removing obstructions,
After these and more, it is just possible there comes
to a man, a woman, the divine power to speak
words."

Whitman lived a full life. He read much—the great epics of India, the poetry of Homer and Dante ; the Bible was carefully studied from Genesis to Revelation. He mixed with

many people, being particularly drawn to those whom the world calls common. His friends were stage-drivers, boatmen, farmers, mechanics, railroad men, mothers of families, and there was always a warm place in his heart for the illiterate and the outcast. He was "no stander above men or apart from them." He felt that kinship for all humanity which characterises all great men, and he could say, with perfect truth :

"Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me."

We can see him, in his own words, as a

". . . meeter of savage and gentleman on equal terms,
Attitudes lithe and erect, costume free, neck gray
and open, of slow movement on foot,
Passer of his right arm round the shoulders of his
friends, companion of the street,
Persuader always of people to give him their sweetest
touches, and never their meanest.
A Manhattanese bred, fond of Brooklyn, fond of
Broadway, fond of the life of the wharves and
the great ferries,
Enterer everywhere, welcomed everywhere, easily
understood after all.
Never offering others, always offering himself. . . ."

There is always much more autobiography in
the creative works of an author than the public

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suspects—perhaps even more than in an account which is described as an autobiography. A writer tells far more of his inner history in his poems, his essays, and his novels than he does in the story of his life, and infinitely more than his friends can learn from observation and tea-table gossip. And this is as true of Whitman as it is of anyone, for he himself says :

“ . . . this is no book,
Who touches this touches a man.”

If we would learn the real life story of the Prophet we must go to *Leaves of Grass* rather than to the biographies. There we shall find his heart-throbs, his laughter, and his tears. There we shall learn of the influences which made him what he was, and the crises that were the landmarks in his life. A man rarely discloses the story of his heart in the cold print of an autobiography, or allows it to be disclosed in an account written by another, but he will pour forth his soul in the parable and the poem. Perhaps it is Whitman the man—the carpenter of Brooklyn—who is speaking in the lines :

“ Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage
for fear I effuse unreturn'd love,
But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay
is certain one way or another,

(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was
not return'd,
Yet out of that I have written these songs.)"

Again, there is something that haunts one in
the poem beginning : " Out of the cradle end-
lessly rocking." It seems that one is reading
of more than

" Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted
with brown."

It is surely no third person who relates the
story of how the she-bird disappears, and on
the shore the he-bird cries out his heart :

" He called on his mate,
He poured forth the meanings which I of all men
know. . . .

" O night ! Do I not see my love fluttering out
among the breakers ?
What is that little black thing I see there in the
white ? . . .

" Low-hanging moon !
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow ?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate !
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

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“Land ! land ! O land !

Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me
my mate back again if you only would.

For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way
I look,

“O rising stars !

Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise
with some of you.”

One thing is certain, from whatever cause,
“the divine power to speak words ” has come.
The Prophet is ready with his message. The
carpenter takes up the pen and writes—in the
street, out on the shore by the lapping waves,
in the fields, and on the ferry. Regardless of
forms, poetical and otherwise, regardless of
conventions, regardless of everything, he has
his say. It is the message of one man to the
world, but through that one man there seems
to speak a whole generation struggling forward
to a better order. The aspirations and longings
often little understood, of countless thousands
are gathered up and find expression in the
throbbing words of the Prophet of the New Era.
The past has had its day. It must give way
to the ever-present, and to the future.

“I conn'd old times,

I sat studying at the feet of the great masters . . .

“ Dead poets, philosophs, priests,
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,
Language-shapers on other shores,
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn,
or desolate,
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what
you have left wafted hither,
I have perused it, own it is admirable (moving
awhile among it),
Thinking nothing can ever be greater, nothing can
ever deserve more than it deserves,
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dis-
missing it,
I stand in my place with my own day here.”

CHAPTER III

A SERMON ON THE MOUNT—OF VISION

“ And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain.”
—*Matthew v. 1.*

IT has ever been so. When the prophet has desired to make his voice heard by the multitudes he has always gone up into a mountain. Those who speak to the few, whose message is only for their own day, need but climb on the nearest hillock. Men soon gather round. But he who would have the ear of the world and of that ever-growing multitude Posterity, must get himself to the mountains. The higher the mountain, the larger his audience. Maybe the men at the foot of the mountain will not hear his words ; they may even fail to see that he is there, for it is rarely one's eye can reach the summit of a mountain from its base.

I write of the Mountain of Vision, for it was from this eminence that the Prophet of Nazareth gave to the world his great sermon. From the same mountain came the Vedas, the “ Dhamma-

pada," the "Bhagavad Gîta" and the Koran, and all books that have become sacred to humanity. And it was to the Mount of Vision that Whitman climbed before he sang the "Song of Myself," and other poems included under the title, *Leaves of Grass*. At present I am concerned with the "Song of Myself." It stands at the beginning of the book, and may be called Whitman's "Confession of Faith."

"I swear I will never again mention love or death
inside a house,

And I swear I will never translate myself at all,
only to him or her who privately stays with me
in the open air.

"If you would understand me go to the heights or
water-shore."

We must be prepared for wide expanses, far-stretching vistas, if we would grasp the message of Walt Whitman. There must be no building of walls, no saying: "So far and no farther," for the quest is endless. The road before us goes winding on and on towards something which for ever dwarfs our little churches and institutions, built as they are away from the high road of progress in a cul-de-sac where tired men have gathered, persuading themselves they have reached finality. Whitman would rouse

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them from their lethargy, bring them back to the winding road, and set them with their faces towards the golden dawn.

“ Hast never come to thee an hour,
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all
these bubbles, fashions, wealth ?
These eager business aims—books, politics, art,
amours,
To utter nothingness ? ”

When this hour comes everything is transformed. The common things of everyday life take on a new aspect. Man finds himself at one with all, and this at-one-ment raises him and brings miracles in its train.

“ I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to
you.”

In some indefinable way the singer and his song belong to the hearer. He sings not only for himself but for others. He utters those things which others have long been striving to find words for, but which they have failed to express, and thus he becomes the voice of his age. Great songs are always composed in this way. Many contribute a few notes or a few bars, and one gathers the notes and bars together

and casts them into a grand harmony. And all who have shared in the making of the song recognise it as theirs. So with the new world opened up by Whitman in the "Song of Myself." It is not his only ; every part of it belongs also to those who are ready to share it. And every atom is replete with life and beauty. What was once spurned beneath the feet now has a message for the soul.

" I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of
summer grass."

And when the child comes to the poet with the searching question : " What is the grass ? " his answer is ready.

" I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners,
that we may see and remark and say, ' Whose? ' "

And so the Prophet sings on of the common things of life, showing how wonderful they are, how great they are, and how little is the mind of the man who claims to have exhausted and explained them all. He deals always with objects near at hand, experiences that come to

A SERMON ON THE MOUNT 33

all men and women, and events that fall to the lot of the humblest.

“ These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages
and lands, they are not original with me,
If they are not yours as much as mine they are
nothing, or next to nothing,
If they are not the riddle and the untying of the
riddle they are nothing,
If they are not just as close as they are distant, they
are nothing.

“ This is the grass that grows wherever the land is
and the water is,
This is the common air that bathes the globe.”

Whitman seems to identify himself with the
Life of the Universe, and with the Spirit that
moves through all things.

“ I am he that walks with the tender and growing
night,
I call to the earth and sea half-hid by the night.”

He has heard men talk of beginnings and
ends, but on the Mount of Vision he can see
neither beginning nor end. Both ways he is
faced with eternity, and in the present he finds
always

“ Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.”

But he acknowledges his debt and the everlasting debt of the world to the men who measure and weigh, the men who examine and diagnose, the men who label and tabulate.

“ Hurrah for positive science ! long live exact demonstration !

Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,

This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a grammar of the old cartouches,

These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,

This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is the mathematician.

“ Gentlemen, to you the first honour always !

Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,

I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.”

For the dwelling of the Prophet of the New Era is Eternity. In time he can find no abiding place. He looks back and lo, in the “ huge first Nothing ” he finds he was there. He looks forward and sees “ a perpetual journey ” ahead. He wonders why men rush and hurry about so, why they have so little faith in eternal principles and are always clutching so eagerly at the straws of riches and material comfort. In the eyes of “ the oxen that rattle the yoke and chain, or

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halt in the leafy shade," he sees something that in man is missing—and he sings :

" I think I could turn and live with animals, they
are so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.

" They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their
sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to
God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the
mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived
thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole
earth."

And as he gazes on the animals and thinks of
the tokens of himself which they show, there
comes to him the thought :

" I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently
drop them."

In the calm demeanour of the savage he also
sees something which rebukes our vaunted
civilisation.

" The friendly and flowing savage, who is he ?
Is he waiting for civilisation, or past it and master-
ing it ? "

The outstanding feature of the "Song of Myself" is Whitman's abounding faith in the eternal rightness of things. He knows that everything is working towards ultimate good, but he does not argue about these things. He states his faith and waits for time to prove him right.

"I have no mockings and arguments, I witness and wait."

He seems to see so clearly the past along which he has travelled, that the future becomes the natural sequence to that past, and he would "launch all men and women forward with him into the Unknown." To one who has marked a day and place, and has said: "Then and there I began," it is natural to look to the future with fear and trembling, and to say of another day and another place: "Perhaps then and there I shall end." But to Whitman, who sees no beginning, there can be no ending.

"We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,

There are trillions ahead and trillions ahead of them.

"Births have brought us richness and variety,
And other births will bring us richness and variety. . . .

"There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon
their surfaces, were this moment reduced back to
a pallid float, it would not avail in the long run,

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We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and
farther,

“ A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic
leagues, do not hazard the span or make it
impatient,
They are but parts. . . .”

It is this endless, timeless vision that enables
the prophet to cry with such certainty :

“ I know I am deathless,
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a
carpenter's compass,
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut ✓
with a burnt stick at night. . . .

“ My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,
I laugh at what you call dissolution,
And I know the amplitude of time.”

One is reminded of the defiant faith of Job of
old when one reads Whitman's words about
death. And about God he is equally certain.

“ No array of terms can say how much I am at peace
about God and about death.”

Such is the song which was sung by the
Prophet of the New Era on the Mount of Vision.
I have only touched briefly on the fringes of
the poem. It must be read and studied long

and carefully. If you find it contradictory, you have Whitman's excuse :

" Do I contradict myself ?

Very well then I contradict myself

(I am large, I contain multitudes)."

Whitman's aim is not to lay down a law or to evolve a new system. His object is not to astonish, any more than the daylight astonishes—or the "redstart twittering through the woods." He would have you learn the secrets of the universe, so that you may yourself climb the Mount of Vision, and from thence look out on the world—and understand.

" Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth, and sun
(there are millions of suns left),

You shall no longer take things at second or third
hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor
feed on the spectres in books,

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take
things from me,

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from
yourself."

CHAPTER IV

A PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

“From whence hath this man these things?”—*Mark* vi. 2.

“Is not this the carpenter? . . . And they were offended at him.”—*Mark* vi. 3.

“And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.”—*Mark* iii. 21.

“A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”—*Mark* vi. 4.

“And he marvelled because of their unbelief.”—*Mark* vi. 6.

WHEN men look back to the past they marvel at the blindness that failed to recognise the transcendent glory of the personality of Jesus, and they are apt to say, as did the Pharisees: “If *we* had been in the days of our fathers, *we* would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.” It is an idle boast, for frequently as they use the words they are flinging stones at the prophets of their own day.

It seems inevitable that the greater the prophet, the more he is misunderstood by his

own generation, and the storm that met Whitman's first slim volume of poems has rarely been equalled. He spoke "as one having authority," and his daring utterances took men's breath away. Then the old, old drama was re-enacted. Men cried: "From whence hath this man these things. . . . Is not this the carpenter?" They were offended at him. Some said he was mad. A few were doubtful, and like the Athenians they said: "We will hear thee again." One or two, out of the millions of his fellow-countrymen, recognised in him the great man he undoubtedly was.

The Prophet of the New Era has arrived. We can picture him standing there, head and shoulders above his fellows, and throwing out his challenge:

"Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,
To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the universe,
For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them."²²

At his thundering voice men begin to look to their little tottering conventions, their comfortable creeds, and their respectable tradi-

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tions, for he seems to say, after all his profound utterances :

“ What is your money-making now ? What can it do now ?

What is your respectability now ?

What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-books, now ?

Where are your jibes of being now ?

Where are your cavils about the soul now ? ”

If we take the men of Whitman's time and judge them by the welcome they gave to the Prophet we shall learn who were greatest—not in the eyes of their fellows, but in the eyes of all time. Lowell, Longfellow and Holmes condemned him. He was crude, inartistic, they said. Emerson's welcome was warmer, but later he joined the critics. When Whitman heard that some in England were eager for his poems, he said : “ I confess I am surprised that America, to whom I especially addressed myself, is so utterly silent.”

“ He marvelled because of their unbelief.”

But we read of two men who realised his greatness. Thoreau, who visited him, said : “ He is Democracy,” and wrote later : “ Since I have seen him I find that I am not disturbed by any brag or egoism in his book. He may turn out the least of a braggart of all, having a

better right to be confident." And Lincoln, on seeing Whitman from the windows of the White House, said: "Well, he *is* a Man." And I believe that just as surely as Lowell, Longfellow, Holmes and Emerson are withdrawing to the background, so surely will the greatness of Thoreau and Lincoln be realised. I believe, too, that the recognition of greatness was mutual. We can read it between the lines of Whitman's simple account of his visit to Thoreau's grave in Sleepy Hollow. There he "stood a long while and pondered," and when he visited the spot by Walden Pond where Thoreau's hut had stood, and found there a cairn of stones, to mark the place, he too "carried one and deposited on the heap." Of his love for Lincoln there can be no doubt. The lines "O Captain! My Captain!" tell of a heart touched by sorrow, and that wonderful poem "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," will long be the greatest tribute to America's greatest President. Its haunting strains tell us something of what death ought to mean to us:

"When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky
in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning
spring.

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“ Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the
west,
And thought of him I love. . . .

“ O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there
I loved ?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet
soul that has gone ?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him
I love ? ”

And the song he chants is an invocation to
Death :

“ Come, lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriv-
ing,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate death. . . .

“ Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest
welcome ?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed
come, come unfalteringly.

“ Approach, strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously
sing the dead,
Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O death.”

For years the controversy raged round Whitman, and for the most part it took the form of abuse, ridicule, and severe condemnation. But the Prophet, "torn, stormy, amid these vehement days," went on his way. His was pioneer work, and he knew well the duties of the pioneer.

"Have the elder races halted?

Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the seas?

We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,

Pioneers! O pioneers!"

The persecution, "the ironical smiles and mockings" of those who remained behind mattered not to him. He was already moving onward, and was even strengthened by the forces that would have detained him.

"I am more resolute because all have denied me than I could ever have been had all accepted me, I heed not and have never heeded either experience, cautions, majorities, nor ridicule."

The slim volume grew larger. Hundreds of men, workers in the shops and on the streets, on the land and on the ferries, many mothers of families, and many children loved the Prophet for what he was. They were not affected by

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the scorn of the critics. They did not read Whitman's poems—they saw them. And as they appeared to them, translated into actions, they were the eternal poems of love that all men and women and children of all ages understand and accept.

Walt Whitman had his hours of joy in these stormy days. His soul was supreme, and he knew the

“ . . joys of pensive thought,
Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender,
gloomy heart,
Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet
proud, the suffering and the struggle,
The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn
musings day or night,
Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres
Time and Space,
Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the
divine wife, the sweet, eternal, perfect comrade,
Joys all thine own, undying one, joys worthy thee,
O soul.”

The time when Jesus became great was the moment when “they all forsook him and fled.” The hour of Buddha's triumph was the hour of solitude under the Bo-tree. The days of the greatness of Kung Foo-tsze were the days of his exile and wandering. And with Whitman

likewise the time of trial, the true testing time,
proved the hour of his victory.

“ O to struggle against great odds, to meet enemies
undaunted !
To be entirely alone with them, to find how much
one can stand !
To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face
to face !
To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of
guns with perfect nonchalance !
To be indeed a God ! ”

His abounding faith carried him through,
not without scars, it is true, but without his
turning in the least from the path that lay
ahead. He cried with the prophet Ezekiel :
“ Whether they will hear or whether they will
forbear, yet shall they know there hath been
a prophet among them.” And his words will
always bring strength to those who look ahead,
and who build for the future. In hours of doubt
and trial, when those of their own house scoff,
when their countrymen are offended and their
friends seek to lay hands on them, the pioneers
will be stirred to renewed zeal by the words of
the Prophet of the New Era floating down
the ages :

“ Say on, sayers ! sing on, singers !
Delve ! mould ! pile the words of the earth !

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Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come
in use,

When the materials are all prepared and ready, the
architects shall appear.

“ I swear to you the architects shall appear without
fail,

I swear to you they will understand you and justify
you,

The greatest among them shall be he who best knows
you, and encloses all and is faithful to all,

He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall
perceive that you are not an iota less than they,
You shall be fully glorified in them.”

CHAPTER V

THE CITY OF FRIENDS : WHITMAN'S " KINGDOM OF GOD "

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God."—*Mark i. 14.*

THERE is one great idea which permeates the message of the Nazarene—his conception of the Kingdom of God. He has had a vision of a time when all men shall dwell together in peace and harmony as children of one Father, and everything he says has some bearing on that vision. In beatitude, in prayer, in parable, in admonition and in exhortation, we find him turning and returning to this one idea. Whether the vision came to him as he listened to John the Baptist by the River Jordan, or as he haunted the solitudes of his beloved Galilean hills, is a matter of little moment. He dreamed his dream, he preached his gospel, and he died for his ideal.

To Whitman, too, there came a dream. It

has been suggested that Emerson was Whitman's inspirer—his "John the Baptist." Be that as it may, when Whitman "came into Galilee preaching the gospel," "John" was already in prison. He was fast housed in the great prison of Culture, whose high walls, Respectability and Conventionality, shut from his view the struggling masses who awaited the Prophet of the New Era. Emerson's gospel was a thing for drawing-rooms and select groups of intellectuals. Walt Whitman "descended into the arena."

And this was his dream :

" I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the
attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth,
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust
love, it led the rest,
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of
that city,
And in all their looks and words."

Having had the vision, he must go forth with his gospel. He must fill men and women with robust love. He must inspire a new spirit of comradeship which will knit humanity more closely together. He must build the new City of Friends. Already he sees that city in being

—a city in which all are filled with love—
“knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing love”—

“Love like the light silently wrapping all.”

And so it is that Whitman becomes the poet of comrades.

“I will sing the song of companionship,
I will show what alone must finally compact these,
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly
love, indicating it in me,
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires
that were threatening to consume me,
I will lift what has too long kept down those
smouldering fires,
I will give them complete abandonment,
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of
love,
For who but I should understand love with all its
sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades.”

To the Prophet's heart has come the conviction that “all the men ever born are his brothers, and the women his sisters and lovers” If he can only infuse this “manly attachment,” this “athletic love,” this “subtle electric fire,” into others, his aim will be accomplished. Henceforth this shall be his one idea. He will sing no other song.

“ I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again utter a call only their call. . . .

“ Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make the divine magnetic lands,
 With the love of comrades,
 With the life-long love of comrades.

“ I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers . . . and along the shores . . .
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
 By the love of comrades,
 By the manly love of comrades.”

And what shall be the token of this love?
The Prophet takes as token a little flower plucked by the pond-side.

“ And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the pond-side
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns again never to separate from me,
And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades, this calamus-root shall,
Interchange it, youths, with each other ! let none render it back !)”

And where shall the new city stand? It

may stand anywhere on the earth, for the Prophet says:

“I have look’d for equals and lovers, and found them
ready for me in all lands.”

The new city will stand wherever the soul of man “rejoices in comrades.” It will take “permanent shape” wherever men and women will follow Whitman’s “example to lovers.”

“Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.”

It is not the aim of the Prophet of the New Era to found another institution, any more than it was the aim of Jesus to found the Christian Church. Neither does he seek to destroy institutions.

“Only I will establish . . . in every city . . .
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel
little or large that dents the waters,
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades.”

For Whitman has studied the systems and philosophies. He has gone to their fountain-heads—to Socrates, Plato, Christ, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel—and underneath all, par-

ticularly underneath Socrates and Christ, is
“the expression of love for men and women,”

“The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction
of friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children
and parents,
Of city for city and land for land.”

The very simplicity of the religion of the great ones seems to make men suspect its efficacy, and perhaps that is why men have always added to the gospel of love which the prophets have preached. It is the old story of Naaman the leper, which may be taken as a parable. “If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?” But simply to wash and be clean! Nonsense! Simply to love one another! What foolishness is this! No church would be needed for such a religion—no Bible would be necessary. There must be some mistake. So men carefully create a theology to bolster up the simple religion, and in the end the religion is killed and only the theology remains. It is then that it becomes necessary to have a restatement of the one religion, and a sweeping away of the trappings of theology that have killed it. Such was Whitman’s task—to make plain to

the world once more that only one thing is needed to bring the Kingdom of God, the City of Friends, into actual being, and that one thing is that men and women should love one another with a love that will defy everything that would separate one from another.

Where then does the new city stand? Let the Prophet himself answer:

“ A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,

If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

“ The place where the great city stands is not the place of stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce merely,

Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the anchor-lifters of the departing,

Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling goods from the rest of the earth,

Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where money is plentiest,

Nor the place of the most numerous population.

“ Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards,

Where the city stands that is lov'd by these, and loves them in return and understands them,

Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds,

Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,

Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases.

Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons. . . .

Where children are taught to be laws to themselves,
and to depend on themselves,

Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,

Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,

Where women walk in public processions in the streets the same as the men,

Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same as the men.

Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,

Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,

Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,

Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,

There the great city stands."

Somewhere within the walls of the great city to be built under the inspiration of the Prophet of the New Era

" . . . shall all that forwards perfect human life be started,

Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

" Here you shall trace in flowing operation,

In every state of practical, busy movement, the rills of civilisation,

Materials here under your eye shall change their shape as if by magic. . . .

“ In large calm halls, a stately museum shall teach
you the infinite lessons of minerals,

In another, woods, plants, vegetation shall be
illustrated—in another animals, animal life and
development.

“ One stately house shall be the music house,
Others for other arts—learning, the sciences, shall
all be here. . . .

“ Practical, peaceful life, the people’s life, the People
themselves,
Lifted, illumin’d bathed in peace—elate, secure in
peace.”¹

Such are the hints Whitman throws out to
guide the builders of the City of Friends. He
himself cannot build the city. It can only be
built when groups of men and women follow
his plans ; for he is the great architect and has
left his designs in our hands. He says truly
that the poems he has written in the name of
friendship expose him more than all his other
poems. They bring us very near to the great
loving heart from which they flowed. He is
the architect, and he the sower. It is ours
to build—and to reap. He brings us roots
and leaves,

“ Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind
around tighter than vines,
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage
of trees as the sun is risen,

Breezes of land and love set from living shores to
you on the living sea, to you, O sailors !

Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs
offer'd fresh to young persons wandering out in
the fields when the winter breaks up,

Love-buds put before you and within you whoever
you are,

Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,

If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they
will open and bring form, color, perfume, to you,

If you become the aliment and the wet they will
become flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees."

Somewhen we shall reach thee, O City of
Friends ! Somewhere we shall find thee, O
habitation of comrades ! We shall breathe thy
subtle air ; we shall feel around us and pervad-
ing us the impalpable sense " that words and
reason hold not." We shall yet know the time
when it is common for " natural persons old
and young " to walk hand in hand, and when
we may, if we wish, speak to a stranger, and he
to us. One great spirit of comradeship shall
be the mainspring of all our actions, binding
man to man, city to city and nation to nation.
We shall live for thee, O love, " fast-anchor'd,
eternal, O love ! "

" Is it a dream ?

Nay, but the lack of it the dream,

And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,

And all the world a dream."

CHAPTER VI

A FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

“How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”—*Mark* ii. 16.

ALL truly great men have shown an affinity to common people. The publicans and sinners who flocked round the Prophet of Nazareth were not necessarily wrong-doers. They were chiefly men and women who were outside the pale of orthodox religion, people who found little to satisfy them in ceremonial and formalism, but who could respond at once to the loving smile, the gentle touch, and the kind word. Ordinary full-blooded, careless, straightforward, honest, human (always human) beings. Such always recognise a religion of deeds, even though they spurn a religion of creeds.

And when the Prophet of the New Era starts from Paumanok with his songs, he dedicates them to the common people, the

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workers singing at their work. He hears them singing the varied carols of their trades.

“Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should
be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank
or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work,
or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his
boat, the deck-hand singing on the steamboat
deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the
hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter’s song, the ploughboy’s on his way
in the morning, or at noon intermission or at
sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young
wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to
none else.”

Whitman found it a sheer delight to be amongst these men and women. He knew what it was “to feel at home among common people.” He threw himself into their joys and sorrows. He understood their aspirations and ideals. They were natural, and he loved them for it. They did not try to appear something other than themselves. They put no barrier of conventionality between themselves and

the Prophet who moved freely amongst them.
He found a thrill in their very contact :

“ To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing,
laughing flesh is enough,
I do not ask any more delight ; I swim in it, as in
the sea.

There is something in staying close to men and
women and looking on them, and in the contact
and odor of them, that pleases the soul well.

All things please the soul, but these please the soul
well.”

It was ever the human, the elemental, that
drew Whitman. He liked men and women
who could laugh and cry, who could show
natural emotion without fear or shame.

“ Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine
male and female,
For me those that have been boys and that love
women,
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings
to be slighted,
For me the sweetheart and the old maid, for me
mothers and the mothers of mothers,
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed
tears,
For me children and the begetters of children.”

It is said that Emerson once asked Whitman
what he found in the society of the common

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people that satisfied him so ; for his part he could not find anything. Emerson would have asked Jesus the same question. "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners ? " These were the very men and women who could respond to "the brother of all men and the lover of all women," for was not he too elemental and human ? These

" Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on farms,
Sailor men, merchant men, coasters, immigrants "

were the very ones who felt better for his presence amongst them ; these were his real disciples though they might not have read a line of his poems.

" The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take me with him all day,
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of my voice,
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and seamen and love them.

" The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me,
and I do not fail them,

On that solemn night (it may be their last) those
that know me seek me.
My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down
alone in his blanket,
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt
of his wagon,
The young mother and the old mother comprehend
me,
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and
forget where they are,
They and all would resume what I have told them."

Whitman sees all as they are, but also as they
will be. He sees them moving on in the great
evolution. Already they are as gods:

"What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the
hand, and with voices I love call me promptly
and loudly by my nighest name as I approach?"

The Buddhas and Christs of the earth will
always be the friends of publicans and sinners.
They will always have time to turn aside from
their preaching and teaching to lend a helping
hand to the lame dog, and to give a smile and a
word of love to the one who is down. The lamer
the dog, the farther down the one who has
fallen by the way, and the more tender will be
the proffered help, the sweeter the words of
encouragement. How much of autobiography.

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is there in Whitman's lines on the runaway slave?
They read true. We can almost see the hunted
man's revolving eyes.

"The runaway slave came to my house and stopt out-
side,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the wood-
pile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw
him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and
assured him,
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated
body and bruise'd feet,
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own,
and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes
and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his
neck and ankles ;
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated
and pass'd north,
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd
in the corner."

Many hard words have been spoken of
Whitman because he deigned to be the poet
not only of goodness but of wickedness also.
His was no "fault-finder's gait or rejecter's
gait." His all-inclusive love took in the sinner
with the saint, and as he pauses by the gate of

the city dead-house, and sees there on the damp brick pavement the unclaimed corpse of a poor dead prostitute, he drops a tear and a word of love for the one who is dead.

“ The divine woman, her body, I see the body, I look
on it alone,
That house once full of passion and beauty, all else
I notice not,
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet
nor odors morbidic impress me,
But the house alone—that wondrous house—that
delicate fair house—that ruin !
That immortal house more than all the rows of
dwellings ever built !
Or white-domed capitol with majestic figure sur-
mounted, or all the old high-spired cathedrals,
That little house alone more than them all—poor,
desperate house !
Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—itself a
soul,
Unclaim’d, avoided house—take one breath from
my tremulous lips,
Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of
you,
Dead house of love.”

And floating down the ages we seem to hear another voice—a sweet and yearning voice, a voice, like Whitman’s, full of understanding and forgiveness, “ Neither do I condemn thee.”

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The great ones know that in the fulness of time even these will arrive. They know that somewhere beneath the outer and the gross, somewhere behind that which men call vice, there is an inner beauty and a virtue-to-be.

- " In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.
- " By every life a share or more or less,
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd
the seed is waiting. . . .
- " For it has history gather'd like husks around the
globe,
For it the entire star-myrriads roll through the
sky. . . .
- " For it the partial to the permanent flowing,
For it the real to the ideal tends.
- " For it the mystic evolution.
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also
justified.
- " Forth from their masks, no matter what,
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile
and tears,
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

“ Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds
of men and states,
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,
Only the good is universal.”

CHAPTER VII

MANY THINGS—IN PARABLES

“And he spake many things unto them in parables.”—
Matt. xiii. 3.

WHO spoke, or wrote, the first parable? Probably we shall never know. This thought-provoking method of teaching is a thing of ancient days. We find many parables in the Buddhist scriptures and in the Upanishads. To bygone Israel the prophet Isaiah uttered his parable of the vineyard, and an unknown author wrote that beautiful, if gently satirical, parable of Jonah. The rabbis of the time of Jesus made extensive use of this mode of teaching, and the Prophet of Nazareth brought it to a fine art in the beautiful parables of the Gospels.

It seems fitting, then, that the Prophet of the New Era should embody much of his teaching in story form. To analyse all the parables of Walt Whitman would require a volume in itself. I can but touch briefly on

the subject, pointing out the types used, suggesting what great thoughts lie behind the simple stories, and perhaps encouraging the reader to make a closer examination of this aspect of the many-sided Prophet.

We can find much of Whitman's history in these stories scattered through his pages. When I began to read that

"There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he
became,
And that object became part of him for the day or
a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years;
The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and
white and red clover, and the song of the phœbe-
bird . . ."

I knew instinctively that I was reading the story of the Prophet's boyhood, but as I read on I realised that I was reading much more. This great poem which ends,

"These became part of that child who went forth
every day, and who now goes, and will always
go forth every day,"

is nothing less than the Parable of the Power.

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of Environment, written as only Whitman could write it.

For he tells us in another parable that he possesses a wonderful picture-gallery.

“ In a little house keep I pictures suspended, it is not
a fix'd house,
It is round, it is only a few inches from one side to
the other ;
Yet behold, it has room for all the shows of the
world, all memories !
Here the tableaus of life, and here the groupings of
death ;
Here, do you know this ? this is cicerone himself,
With finger rais'd he points to the prodigal pictures.”

How much the world owes to that picture-gallery !

Sometimes Whitman carefully explains his parables. Sometimes he leaves it to the imagination of the reader to find the solution. Small things suggest great, bridging the gulf between the spider and the soul.

“ A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood
isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out
of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

“ And you, O my soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, detached in measureless oceans of
space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the
spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the
ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere,
O my soul.”

The profound subject of death is one to which Whitman is ever turning in his endeavour to infuse into men and women a faith that will triumph over the apparent dissolution. In one instance he pictures himself as the power which will enable the one who is dying to realise that this is not the end, and he conveys his meaning to the reader in a remarkable parable :

“ To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the
knob of the door.
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,
Let the physician and the priest go home.

“ I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,
O despairer, here is my neck,
By God, you shall not go down ! hang your whole
weight upon me.

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" I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd
force,
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

" Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,
Not doubt, not decease shall dare to lay a finger
upon you,
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you
to myself,
And when you rise in the morning you will find what
I tell you is so."

It will be all right "in the morning." And
there is a ray, nay a strong beam, of comfort
for those who remain behind in another parable
which to me is the most hauntingly beautiful
of all Whitman's poems:

" On the beach at night,
Stands a child with her father,
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

" Up through the darkness,
While ravening clouds, the burial-clouds, in black
masses spreading,
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in
the east,
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

“ From the beach the child holding the hand of her
father,
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to
devour all,
Watching, silently weeps.

“ Weep not, child,
Weep not, my darling,
With these kisses let me remove your tears,
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the
stars only in apparition,
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another
night, the Pleiades shall emerge,
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and
golden shall shine out again,
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out
again, they endure,
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring
pensive moons shall again shine.

“ Then, dearest child, mournest thou only for Jupiter ?
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars ?

“ Something there is . . .
Something there is more immoral even than the
stars,
Something that shall endure longer even than
lustrous Jupiter,
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.”

Walt Whitman is often spoken of as the
American Nature poet, and the “ Song of the

Open Road " is frequently printed as part of the lore of the wayfarer. It is a fine nature poem, but those who take it simply as a nature poem, and nothing else, miss the greater part of its beauty and meaning. They miss as much as they would miss if they took Christ's Parable of the Sower simply as an essay in farming practice, or Omar's poem as a drinking song. For in reality, just as in the story of the Sower the field is the world, and the seed is the word of the prophets, and as in the lines of Omar we have a profound philosophy, so in the "Song of the Open Road" we are dealing with the eternal verities. This poem is the Parable of the Perpetual Journey. To understand it, it is necessary

"To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads,
as roads for travelling souls."

Another parable, in the "Song of Myself," will help us to understand better the longer parable of the wayfarers on the open road:

"I tramp a perpetual journey,
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a
staff cut from the woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,

But each man and each woman of you I lead upon
a knoll,

My left hand hooking you round the waist,

My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents
and the public road.

“Not I, not anyone else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself.

“It is not far, it is within reach,
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born
and did not know,
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

“Shoulder your duds, dear son, and I will mine, and
let us hasten forth,
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as
we go.

“If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff
of your hand on my hip,
And in due time you shall repay the same service to
me,
For after we start we never lie by again.”

Again we learn that on the great journey
through life the only thing that matters is
comradeship—the helping hand stretched out
to the fellow-traveller—the “love more precious
than money.”

In the same way we shall find that “Passage
to India,” “Mother with thy Equal Brood,”

and the Songs of "The Rolling Earth," "Occupations," "The Answerer," "The Broad Axe," "Exposition," and "The Redwood Tree" are all great parables with great interpretations. And scattered throughout *Leaves of Grass* are numerous shorter parables, a few of which I indicate in the following list:—

The Seasons ("Inscriptions").

The Twenty-Eight Bathers ("Song of Myself").

The Wild Bee ("Children of Adam").

The Oak Tree ("Calamus").

The Meteors ("Birds of Passage").

The Two Birds ("Sea-Drift").

The Hand-Mirror ("By the Roadside").

The Astronomer and the Stars ("By the Roadside").

The Convict Soul ("Autumn Rivulets").

The Knife-Grinder ("Autumn Rivulets").

The Ploughman ("Whispers of Heavenly Death").

Like all great teachers, Whitman turned for inspiration to the common things of life. He showed how we are always surrounded by teachers, if we have but ears to hear their promptings and eyes to see their directions.

There is one parable which is important because it tells us more about the Prophet

himself than all the so-called "Lives" have done. It was written in Platte Cañon, Colorado, and gives us, in fact, the secret of Whitman's genius.

" Spirit that form'd this scene,
These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,
These reckless heaven-ambitious peaks,
These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this naked
freshness,
These formless wild arrays, for reasons of their own,
I know thee, savage spirit—we have-communed
together,
Mine too such wild arrays, for reasons of their own ;
Was't charged against my chants they had forgotten
art ?
To fuse within themselves its rules precise ?
The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out temple's
grace—column and polish'd arch forgot ?
But thou that revelest here—spirit that form'd this
scene,
They have remember'd thee."

The artist, the sculptor, the architect, creates a work of art by withdrawing himself from the world, and there building up, line by line, cut by cut, stone by stone, his picture, his statue, his temple. With infinite pains he finishes his work, and gives to the world a thing complete. He can say with some

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truth, "Alone I did it." But not such was Whitman's way.

"Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does,
fresh and modern continuously."

It was his aim to get in touch with the laws that made the trees and the flowers, and that caused the bare earth to send forth leaves of grass,

"To put rapport the mountains and rocks and streams,
And the winds of the north, and the forests of oak
and pine,
With you, O soul."

As well ask the leaves of a tree why they do not vary in size according to a fixed system of arithmetical order ; as well ask a bank of primroses why its flowers do not stand in height in accordance with some well-defined law of harmonic progression, as ask Walt Whitman why we cannot scan his poems. For just as in the tree and in the bank of primroses we can recognise a law of harmony which is far superior to that which fashions the picture, the statue, and the temple, so in these poems can we detect a subtle music that remains in

our ears long after the jingle of rhymes has died away.

“Who touches this book touches a man.”
Aye, and more than a man. He touches the Great Law that works unceasingly through the universe. He touches the Source of Being—if he understands the Prophet fully and grasps the true meaning of a significant little parable in his last poem.

“Is it night? Are we here together alone?
It is I you hold and who holds you,
I spring from the pages into your arms.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE THOUGHT OF GOD

“Abba, Father.”—*Mark* xiv. 36.

ONE of the most striking features about the teaching of Jesus was the assurance with which he spoke of the Father. He did not argue about the existence of a God, but seemed to know instinctively that some Being, who occupied the position of a father to his children, watched over the world and its people. He even addressed God in familiar language as “Abba, Father,” just as a child of to-day might say “Daddy.” In all great teachers we find the same assurance. Zarathustra is always very near to Ahura Mazda, and Mohammed is ever within call of Allah, whose prophet he is.

And so it is with the Prophet of the New Era. Sublime assurance is the keynote of Whitman’s thought of God:

“I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious
about God,

(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace
about God and about death).

“ I hear and behold God in every object, yet under-
stand God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonder-
ful than myself.

“ Why should I wish to see God better than this
day ?

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,
and each moment then,

In the faces of men and women I see God, and in
my own face in the glass,

I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every
one is sign'd by God's name,

And I leave them where they are, for I know that
wheresoe'er I go,

Others will punctually come for ever and ever.”

The finite can never fully comprehend the Infinite, but in so far as the finite is merged in the Infinite, may men know God. And the nearer they get to God, the more will they realise their own divinity. That is the thought behind Whitman's words. In his moments of vision he can even identify himself with God and feel around him “ the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth.” At such moments he can say with certainty: “ I know that God is,”

“ And I know that the hand of God is the promise of
my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of
my own.”

But the Prophet is not satisfied with man's conception of God. Even as a child he was struck with the smallness of man's mind.

“ Silent and amazed even when a little boy,
I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put
God in his statements,
As contending against some being or influence.”

Such a conception of God, struggling against another being often more powerful than himself, can never raise man very high. Whilst God fights and struggles for mastery, man also will be a creature of war and strife, for man can never rise higher than his God. The God of whom Whitman as a boy heard the preachers speaking was a very imperfect being. He dwelt in a building made by hands, and would stoop to very questionable actions in order to attain his ends. I can detect in one of Whitman's parables the thought of the Prophet when he heard these men weighing and measuring their God, reducing him to his place in their system, as the astronomer

finds a place for each star and planet in his celestial map.

“ When I heard the learn’d astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns
before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add,
divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he
lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander’d off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to
time,
Look’d up in perfect silence at the stars.”

One look at the stars was sufficient to show Whitman that the preachers were wrong. God could not be cribbed and cabined in creeds and formulas. The Prophet of the New Era must clear away the old ideas of the Great Author and put before the world a nobler conception. That is why we find him

“ Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules
his grandson,
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a
leaf, the crucifix engraved,

With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every
idol and image,
Taking them all for what they are worth and not a
cent more,
Admitting that they were alive and did the work of
their days."

And what were they worth? The Prophet
is always fair when dealing with the past.
These Gods had their day and fulfilled their
purpose. They belonged to the world's in-
fancy. To use his own expressive simile :

"They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have
now to rise and fly and sing for themselves."

Men and women of the New Era must have
something better than the crude notions of the
past. These "rough, deific sketches" must be
filled out in the light of man's evolution, for
Whitman can see around him many men who
have become greater than the Gods of those
dark times. He discovers

"... as much or more in a framer framing a house,
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-
up sleeves driving a mallet and chisel. . . .
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder
ropes no less to me than the gods of the antique
wars."

The New Era, then, must have a new God—a God men can look up to, not one who belongs to a lower level than themselves. In his haste to be rid of the fetters of old Gods the Prophet cries :

“Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy and Achilles’ wrath, and Æneas’,
Odysseus’ wanderings,
Placard ‘Removed’ and ‘To Let’ on the rocks
of your snowy Parnassus,
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa’s
gate and on Mount Moriah. . . .
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide,
untried domain awaits, demands you.”

And in that new domain dwells Walt Whitman’s God, the Great Comrade. It is in the wonderful parable-poem, “Passage to India,” that we find the Prophet’s true thought of God. It is, indeed, as the passionate postscript to the poem says :

“Passage to more than India !”

It is no less than the Parable of Divine Unity, the linking up of the universes under one God. And there is another union figured. The soul, too, goes out on its voyage.

“O we can wait no longer,
We too take ship, O soul,
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,

Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to
sail,
Amid the wafting winds. . . .
Caroling free, singing our song of God. . . .

Ah more than any priest, O soul, we too believe in
God,
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally. . . .

“ Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the
night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and
Death, like waters flowing,
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all
over,
Bathe me, O God, in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

“ O thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes—thou
centre of them,
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the
loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection’s source—
thou reservoir,
(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—waitest
not there ?
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the
Comrade perfect ?)
Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,

How should I think, how breathe a single breath,
how speak, if, out of myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes ?

“ Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and
Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee, O soul, thou actual
Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

“ Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding, O soul, thou journeyest forth ;
What love than thine and ours could wider amplify ?
What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours, O
soul ?
What dreams of the ideal ? what plans of purity,
perfection, strength ?
What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give
up all ?
For others' sake to suffer all ?

“ Reckoning ahead, O soul, when thou, the time
achiev'd,
The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage
done,
Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim
attain'd,
As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder
Brother found,
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.”

Has ever man come nearer God than the man who wrote those words? Has ever a human soul been nearer merged in God? Has ever the finite more nearly become the Infinite? We cannot all reach the heights that Whitman reached—not yet. There are still amongst us birds not fully fledged. And to these the Prophet brings food that will nourish and strengthen. Cast off those old Gods, he seems to say; a man can never be good if he has a bad God. If you would have something tangible to cleave to, let it be something higher than yourself—so that you may look up and not down.

“Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,
Be thou my God. . . .

“All great ideas, the races’ aspirations,
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,
Be ye my Gods.

“Or Time and Space,
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,
Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,
Be ye my Gods.

"Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or
know,
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O
soul,)
Be thou my God."

CHAPTER IX

SIGNS FROM HEAVEN

“And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven.”—*Mark* viii. 11.

THE blind Pharisee always asks for a sign from heaven—it is part of his blindness. It was so in the time of Jesus, and it was so when, six hundred years later, the Prophet of Allah gave to the world his great book. In the Koran we read: “They say, ‘By no means will we believe on thee till thou cause a fountain to gush forth for us from the earth, or till thou have a garden of palm-trees and grapes, and thou cause rivers to flow in its midst.’” And Mohammed answered: “On earth are signs for men of firm belief, and also in your own selves.”

That will always be the true answer to the Pharisee’s question. Misguided followers, in their eagerness to glorify the Nazarene, have made their Master work wonders to impress the unbelieving, but Christ’s real answer to the

demand: "Show us a sign from heaven," was, and will ever be: "Consider the lilies."

Whitman seems to have anticipated the stock question of the Pharisee. His prayer by broad Potomac's shore in his later years was answered long before it was uttered. When he returns to his old haunt and finds again

" . . . the full flush spring returning,
Again the freshness and the odors, again Virginia's
summer sky, pellucid blue and silver,
Again the forenoon purple of the hills,
Again the deathless grass, so noiseless soft and green,
Again the blood-red roses blooming,"

he thus invokes his Muse :

" Perfume this book of mine, O blood-red roses !
Lave subtly with your waters every line, Potomac !
Give me of you, O spring, before I close, to put
between its pages !
O forenoon purple of the hills, before I close, of you !
O deathless grass, of you ! "

It is already done. As we turn the pages of the Prophet's book we find there all these signs from heaven. Away back in his youth, when he startled the world with his sermon from the Mount of Vision, they were there. He was convinced that God did not need a conjurer to

show forth his power, for "all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any."

"I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey
work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of
sand, and the egg of a wren,
And the tree-toad is a *chef-d'œuvre* for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors
of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn
all machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress'd head sur-
passes any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions
of infidels."

The simple round of everyday life brought to
Whitman the ever-new beauty of the natural
world, and this beauty is reflected in his book:

"A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more
than the metaphysics of books.

"To behold the daybreak!

The little light fades the immense and diaphanous
shadows. . . .

"Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sunrise
would kill me,
If I could not now and always send the sunrise out
of me.

"We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,
We found our own, O my soul, in the calm and cool
of the daybreak."

During the day he also finds messages on every side. He sees a tree "uttering joyous leaves of dark green," and he is reminded of trees under which he cannot walk, "but large and melodious thoughts descend upon him." There are also men and women "that while they are nigh him the sunlight expands his blood." Again, there are the voices of animals, the swiftness and balance of fishes, the dropping of raindrops, and the sunshine and motion of the waves. All bring a particular joy.

In the open air there is happiness, "waiting at all times." The earth is sufficient. He does not "want the constellations any nearer."

"I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open
air, and all free poems also,

I think I could stop here myself and do miracles. . . .

"Now I see the secret of the making of the best
persons,

It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep
with the earth. . . .

"Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,

They may prove well in lecture rooms, yet not
prove at all under the spacious clouds and along
the landscape and flowing currents.

Here is realisation,
Here is a man tallied—he realises here what he has
in him,
The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are
vacant of you, you are vacant of them."

Even from ugliness comes beauty and a great lesson for man. As the thrush, feeding on worms and loathsome grubs, gives forth in "tones of joy and faith ecstatic" its sweet spiritual songs, so may other transformations follow in the great world of men.

And when the Prophet crosses Brooklyn Ferry a veritable feast awaits him. Glories are "strung like beads" on his "smallest sights and hearings" as he walks in the street and passes over the river. The gorgeous clouds of sunset, the voices of young men, the summer sky, the wheeling sea-birds, the foundry chimneys and the river itself, with its crested and scallop-edged waves, he hails them all as "dumb, beautiful ministers."

"We use you and do not cast you aside—we plant
you permanently within us,
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also,
You furnish your parts toward eternity,
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the
soul."

Nothing is too small to pass his notice.
“Pocketless of a dime,” you may “purchase
the pick of the earth,” for “to glance with an
eye or to show a bean in its pod confounds the
learning of all time.”

Night, too, brings its special lessons and its
special joys. At its worst it is more than the
church and the lecture-room.

“Logic and sermons never convince,
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.”

At its best the cool, refreshing night brings
paradise on earth, for it is then

“I scent the grass, the moist air and the roses.”

As with the round of the day, so too with
the round of the year. The changing times
and seasons have their own peculiar signs from
heaven.

“Ever upon this stage,
Is acted God’s calm annual drama,
Gorgeous processions, songs of birds,
Sunrise that fullest feeds and freshens most the soul,
The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore, the
musical strong waves,
The woods, the stalwart trees, the slender, tapering
trees,
The liliput countless armies of the grass,

The heat, the showers, the measureless pasturages,
The scenery of the snows, the wind's free orchestra,
The stretching light-hung roof of clouds, the clear
cerulean and the silvery fringes,
The high dilating stars, the placid beckoning stars,
The moving flocks and herds, the plains and emerald
meadows,
The shows of all the varied lands and all the growths
and products."

Spring has its special song, for is it not lilac-
time? Then come the

"Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,
Bluebird and darting swallow,"

and the Prophet's soul is stirred. Spring-time
is here, let us be up and away.

"O if one could but fly like a bird!
O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship!
To glide with thee, O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship
o'er the waters;
Gathering these hints, the preludes, the blue sky,
the grass, the morning drops of dew,
The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green heart-
shaped leaves,
Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called
innocence,
Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for
their atmosphere,
To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,
A warble for joy of lilac-time."

Men see the unusual and say: "How wonderful!" Walt Whitman looks on the usual, the common, the everyday event and sees there something far more wonderful.

"The sun and the stars that float in the open air,
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the
drift of them is something grand. . . .

"And that the moon spins round the earth, and on
with the earth is equally wonderful,
And that they balance themselves with the sun and
stars is equally wonderful. . . .

"Illustrious the mystery of motion in all beings, even
the tiniest insect,
Illustrious the attribute of speech, the senses, the
body,
Illustrious the passing light—illustrious the pale
reflection on the new moon in the western sky,
Illustrious whatever I see or hear or touch, to the
last."

When therefore the Pharisee comes, as he
will come, to the Prophet of the New Era, seeking
a sign from heaven, here is his answer. No
miracle is needed, no breaking of the laws which
rule the universe, for the laws themselves
scatter miracles all around.

"Why, who makes much of a miracle?
As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,

Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward
the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in
the edge of the water,
Or stand under trees in the woods,
Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the
bed at night with any one I love,
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a
summer forenoon,
Or animals feeding in the fields,
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown or of stars
shining so quiet and bright,
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon
in spring ;
These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,
The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

“To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is
spread with the same,
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.

“To me the sea is a continual miracle,
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the
waves—the ships with men in them,
What stranger miracles are there ?”

CHAPTER X

THE DISCIPLES—AND THE DINNER BASKET

“When they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”—*Mark* iv. 34.

“And he came to Capernaum : and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace : for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.”—*Mark* ix. 33, 34.

THE man who has many enemies is sure to have some disciples. The best-hated are frequently also the most-loved. Christ had his followers, and when Confucius went into exile a loyal band of admirers shared his trials. In the valley of the Ganges, Gautama Buddha drew around him a company of kindred souls. It was so also with Walt Whitman. Perhaps his real disciples were those who greeted him by his “highest name,” and who felt good in his presence, even though they understood not his words. And perhaps, too, Christ and Buddha had disciples whose names

we do not know. Be this as it may, there were some who understood, in part at any rate, the message of the Prophet of the New Era.

These disciples defended Whitman when he was attacked through the Press. They visited him, some crossing the Atlantic for this purpose, and he expounded to them his gospel. Prominent among them was a woman, an Englishwoman, who, when she first saw the Prophet's portrait, exclaimed: "Here at last is the face of Christ, which painters have so long sought for." Perhaps she was the greatest of all his disciples. When she died Walt Whitman wrote her epitaph.

"My science-friend, my noblest woman-friend (now buried in an English grave—and this a memory-leaf for her dear sake),
Ended our talk—The sum, concluding all we know of old or modern learning, intuitions deep,
Of all the Geologies—Histories—of all Astronomy—of Evolution, Metaphysics all,
Is, that we all are onward, onward, speeding slowly, surely bettering,
Life, life an endless march, an endless army (no halt, but, it is duly over),
The world, the race, the soul—in space and time the universes,
All bound as is befitting each—all surely going somewhere."

“Going somewhere.” How characteristic the phrase which Whitman uses. He too has passed on, and his disciples are left—disputing by the way. A few years after the death of Christ we read how the disciples began to quarrel about the true meaning of his words, or as to whether he actually uttered certain words or not. Did he intend his message for Gentile as well as Jew? What did he say about baptism? As time passed the quarrels became more acute in proportion as the triviality of the matter in dispute increased. And now we find whole bodies of men separated from other bodies because one party claims that to baptize means to dip overhead and the other party is just as certain that it means to sprinkle with water! O those disputes by the way!

And the disciples of Whitman are already following Peter, James, and John. They are even now concerned as to who shall be greatest. Did Whitman really place a copy of Emerson's essays in his dinner-basket when, as a carpenter, he went forth to his work in the city of Brooklyn? Or did he write *Leaves of Grass* before seeing the works of the cultured scholar, thus proving his independence? A momentous question! But cease your disputes by the

way, O disciples. A greater than John the Baptist is here.

Disciples always argue. Masters never. Whitman knew this and so warned men against hair-splitting over his words.

“ I charge you for ever reject those who would expound me.”

And of himself he said :

“ I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.”

But he invites followers to emulate him—if possible, to surpass him. The greatest compliment they can pay him is to rise higher than he.

“ I am the teacher of athletes,
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own
proves the width of my own,
He most honours my style who learns under it to
destroy the teacher.”

It is no light task to become a true disciple of the Prophet of the New Era, and *Leaves of Grass* is not without warnings to those who would “ take up the cross.” It often happens that some passing glance attracts men and women to a new teacher, but later they begin to doubt

if he really is the leader they had thought him to be. And to doubt a leader is to lose oneself in the mazes of speculation and ultimate despair. In the first place, therefore, there must be assurance that he indeed is the teacher needed.

“ Are you the new person drawn toward me ?
To begin with take warning, I am surely far different
from what you suppose ;
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal ?
Do you think it is so easy to have me become your
lover ?
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd
satisfaction ?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful ?
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth
and tolerant manner of me ?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground
toward a real heroic man ?
Have you no thought, O dreamer, that it may be all
maya, illusion ? ”

With the certainty that the first step is in the right direction, there still comes a further warning :

“ Whoever you are holding me now in hand,
Without one thing all will be useless,
I give you fair warning before you attempt me
further,
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

- “ Who is he that would become my follower ?
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections ?
- “ The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps destructive,
You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect to be your sole and exclusive standard,
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to the lives around you would have to be abandon'd,
Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any further, let go your hand from my shoulders,
Put me down and depart on your way.
- “ Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,
Or back of a rock in the open air. . . .
But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching lest any person for miles around approach unawares,
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea or some quiet island,
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new husband's kiss,
For I am the new husband and I am the comrade. . . .
- “ But these leaves conning you con at peril. . . .
- “ For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times and not hit, that which I have hinted at ;
Therefore release me and depart on your way.”

Here we have one of Whitman's most subtle parables. Simple though the religion of love is, it is fundamental, and has a bearing on one's every action. To apply the rule of love to one's life means an entire change of outlook. The old standard of self first, self second, self third and the other man anywhere, preferably last, must be given up, and self and the other man brought together on an equal footing. With every thought that enters the head, every word that is spoken, every deed that is done, this new factor—the other man—must be considered. It means more than is apparent at first sight, and its application on a general scale would be nothing less than revolutionary. It is just as revolutionary in the life of an individual, and a short trial on a very small scale will soon reveal its hidden possibilities. Only a few find the narrow gate of true comradeship, and even of those who find it some fall by the way. For there are hardships and trials. But let the Prophet himself tell you of them :

“ Listen ! I will be honest with you,
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough
new prizes,
These are the days that must happen to you :
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,

You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn
or achieve,

You but arrive at the city to which you were des-
tin'd, you hardly settle yourself to satisfaction
before you are called by an irresistible call to
depart,

You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and
mockings of those who remain behind you,

What beckonings of love you receive you shall only
answer with passionate kisses of parting,

You shall not allow the hold of those who spread
their reach'd hands toward you.

“ *Allons !* after the great Companions, and to belong
to them !

They too are on the road—they are the swift and
majestic men—they are the greatest women.”

Another profound parable. The great Com-
panions, the Buddhas, the Christs, and the
Whitmans are travelling along the road of true
comradeship. If we will we may overtake
them. But we must go by the same road.
There is no other way. They asked little of
the world :

“ A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little
money . . .

A traveller's lodging and breakfast as I journey,”

and they gave everything in return. They gave

themselves, and they could all say, with Walt Whitman, the Prophet of the New Era :

“ I am not one who bestows nothing upon man and woman,

For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all the gifts of the universe.”

CHAPTER XI

YOURSELF, FOR EVER AND EVER !

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation : Neither shall they say, Lo here ! or, lo there ! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”—*Luke xvii. 20, 21.*

THE great mistake of Christians has been to seek to establish the Kingdom without, rather than the Kingdom within. It is like building a house without worrying about the foundations, a mistake which always leads to trouble. The great Companions have ever been explicit on this fundamental principle, but all seem to have been equally misunderstood. Their followers have looked to institutions, churches and creeds, to bring about a state of affairs which can only be the result of a new birth on the part of each individual.

It is impossible to mistake the meaning of Christ's words on the Kingdom within, and Buddha made his message equally clear. In

his Dhammapada, or Way of Truth, he lays down the same eternal law :

“ By ourselves is evil done,
By ourselves we pain endure,
By ourselves we cease from wrong,
By ourselves become we pure.
No one saves us but ourselves,
No one can and no one may,
We ourselves must walk the Path ;
Buddhas merely teach the way.”

And when we turn to the Prophet of the New Era, we find him too pointing out the way to the traveller along the great open road, the road for travelling souls, but he does not forget to add to his instructions the very necessary injunction :

“ Not I, not anyone else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself.”

Whitman does not intend to be mistaken and misunderstood as others have been. Throughout his *Leaves of Grass* he is the “ chanter of personality.” He realises the supreme importance of the individual and dedicates his poems to the “ simple separate person.”

“ For him I sing,
I raise the present on the past,

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With time and space I him dilate and fuse the immortal laws,
To make himself by them the law unto himself."

This is why he sets out from Paumanok to
"effuse egotism and show it underlying all."
This is why he becomes the "bard of personality."

"The soul,
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown
and solid—longer than water ebbs and flows."

Such a thought can only result in man rising higher in his own estimation, becoming more important in the scheme of things, more responsible to himself—and to others. A glance at the past only tends to increase the importance of the soul.

"I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to be.

"My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches
between the steps,
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

"Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I
was even there,
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the
lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid
carbon.

" Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

" Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me.

" Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like
cheerful boatmen,
For room to me stars kept aside in their own
rings,
They sent influences to look after what was to hold
me.

" Before I was born out of my mother generations
guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could
overlay it.

" For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths
and deposited it with care.

" All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete
and delight me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

Can one really grasp such thoughts as these
without feeling larger and better than one
imagined? Man does not yet realise how
much goodness he holds. But Whitman would
take each individual aside and convince him

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of his greatness. And this is what he says " To You " :

" Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks
of dreams,

I fear these supposed realities are to melt from
under your feet and hands. . . .

" Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you,
that you be my poem,

I whisper with my lips close to your ear,

I have loved many women and men, but I love none
better than you.

" O I have been dilatory and dumb,

I should have made my way straight to you long ago,

. . . I should have chanted nothing but you.

" I will leave all and come and make my hymns to
you,

None has understood you, but I understand you,

None has done justice to you, you have not done
justice to yourself,

None but has found you imperfect, I only find no
imperfection in you,

None but would subordinate you, I only am he who
will never consent to subordinate you,

I only am he who places over you no master, owner,
better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in
yourself. . . .

" Whoever you are ! claim your own at any hazard !

These shows of the East and West are tame com-
pared to you,

These immense meadows, these interminable rivers,
you are immense and interminable as they,
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature,
throes of apparent dissolution, you are he or she
who is master or mistress over them,
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature,
elements, pain, passion, dissolution.

"The hopples fall from your ankles, you find an un-
failing sufficiency,
Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected
by the rest, whatever you are promulges itself,
Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are
provided, nothing is scantied,
Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui,
what you are picks its way."

With these words Whitman would send you
out on your own, for there are things you must
find out for yourself.

"Long have you timidly waded, holding a plank by
the shore,
Now I will you to be a bolder swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod
to me, shout, and laughingly dash with your
hair."

But first he would teach you the great lesson
of individual responsibility. Be yourself. He
would rather have you wicked "than virtuous
out of conformity or fear." Wherever your

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lot may be cast there is opportunity for individual greatness :

“ And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero,
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes.”

Still speaking in your ear, the Prophet unfolds the secrets of personality :

“ What do you suppose creation is ?
What do you suppose will satisfy the soul, except to walk free and own no superior ?
What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred ways, but that man or woman is as good as God ?
And that there is no God any more divine than Yourself ?
And that that is what the oldest and newest myths finally mean ?
And that you or any one must approach creations through such laws ?

Man is divine and subject to the laws of God. Not by blind chance is he here, nor by blind chance does he pass on.

“ You are not thrown to the winds, you gather certainly and safely around yourself,
Yourself ! yourself ! Yourself, for ever and ever !

“ It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your
mother and father, it is to identify you,
It is not that you should be undecided, but that
you should be decided,
Something long preparing and formless is arrived
and form'd in you,
You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or
goes. . . .

“ The law of the past cannot be eluded,
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,
The law of the living cannot be eluded, it is eternal,
The law of promotion and transformation cannot
be eluded,
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons, not
one iota thereof can be eluded.”

It rests with you, the Prophet seems to say,
whether you use these laws in the building up
of the greater Self. They are there—for you.

“ Whoever you are ! motion and reflection are especi-
ally for you,
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

“ Whoever you are ! you are he or she for whom the
earth is solid and liquid,
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang
in the sky,
For none more than you are the present and the past,
For none more than you is immortality.

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“ Each man to himself and each woman to herself,
is the word of the past and the present, and the
true word of immortality ;

No one can acquire for another—not one,

Not one can grow for another—not one.

“ The song is to the singer and comes back most to him,
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back
most to him,

The murder is to the murderer and comes back
most to him,

The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,

The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,

The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him
—it cannot fail,

The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor
and actress not to the audience,

And no man understands any greatness or goodness
but his own, or the indication of his own.”

One final word before you go, seems the
Prophet to say to the one he has taken aside.
Remember how great is the power of per-
sonality. “ Nothing endures but personal
qualities.” If you will but heed yourself
instead of the formulas of others. If you will
but unfold yourself, all the rest—your great
ideals and aims—will follow. Nothing is
beautiful or sinful outside yourself. Every-
thing is yours once you are fitted to own it—
“ as if one fit to own things could not at pleasure

enter upon all, and incorporate them into himself or herself."

"Is reform needed? is it through you?

The greater the reform needed the greater the Personality you need to accomplish it.

"You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes, blood, complexion, clean and sweet?

Do you not see how it would serve to have such a body and soul that when you enter the crowd an atmosphere of desire and command enters with you, and every one is impress'd with your Personality?

"O the magnet! the flesh over and over!

Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and commence to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness,

Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own Personality."

Such is the Prophet's message to you—whoever you are.

The world may talk of the greatness and the grandeur of the stars in their constellations. They may rate high their religions, Bibles, institutions, arts, libraries, legends, collections, manufactures, money or business, but Whitman rates higher than them all "a child born of a woman and man." He gives to the world this Parable of Personality:

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“What am I after all but a child, pleas'd with the
sound of my own name ? repeating it over and
over ;
I stand apart to hear— it never tires me.

“To you your name also ;
Did you think there was nothing but two or three
pronunciations in the sound of your name ? ”

And he gives also the great Paradox of Personality :

“Will the whole come back then ?
Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-
glass ? is there nothing greater or more ?
Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen
soul ?

“Strange and hard that paradox I give,
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.”

In these two—the parable and the paradox—will be found summed up the teaching of all the prophets—the message of Christ and Buddha, of Mazzini and Tolstoi. Underneath all is the individual. Nothing is good that ignores the individual.

“The only government is that which makes minute
of individuals,
The whole theory of the universe is directed un-
erringly to one single individual—namely to
You.”

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!”

“Will you seek afar off? you will surely come back at last,
In things best known to you, finding the best, or as good as the best,
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest, lovingest,
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place, not for another hour but this hour,
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother, nighest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife.”

For “the kingdom of God is within you.”
Why should you not stand up in your greatness and exclaim, with Walt Whitman:

“Wonderful to depart!
Wonderful to be here! . . .
To be this incredible God I am!
To have gone forth among other Gods, these men and women I love?”

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” said the Prophet of Nazareth,
“and all these things shall be added unto you.”
And the Prophet of the New Era echoes the same great truth:

“Produce great Persons, the rest follows.”

CHAPTER XII

THE WOUND-DRESSER

“And he healed many that were sick.”—*Mark* i. 34.

“I was sick, and ye visited me.”—*Matt.* xxv. 36.

THE great Companions have always had a healing touch, but in the case of the Nazarene and others the true account of how they brought cheer and soothing to the suffering is hidden beneath a mass of crude miracle stories. Men have fallen into the error of exaggeration in the hope of attracting the attention of the crowd, not realising that exaggeration in the end always defeats its own object. The miracle stories are even now keeping thousands of men and women away from the simple truths which were the real message of the prophets. We need to look behind them for the true stories of healing, and it may be that a study of Walt Whitman as the Wound-Dresser may help us to grasp the germ of truth and beauty behind the legerdemain which surrounds the life stories

of men like Jesus, Buddha, and St Francis of Assisi.

There are always wounds to be dressed wherever a man may live, always broken hearts to be healed, always suffering souls that need the soothing touch of love.

So Whitman brings songs for those who are down, those who in the battle of life have been conquered and slain. He knows that "battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won," so he "beats and pounds for the dead."

"Vivas to those who have fail'd !

And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea !

And to those themselves who sank in the sea !

And to all generals that lost engagements, and all
overcome heroes !

And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the
greatest heroes known ! "

Nowhere in sacred writings will the suffering and the sick, the downtrodden and the oppressed find more soothing words and more inspiring thoughts than in *Leaves of Grass*. Nowhere will the nervous and the distraught, and those who feel that all the world is against them find a warmer welcome than here. Nowhere will a wounded man, a wounded nation, or a wounded world find a more healing salve than in the sweet words of love and comrade-

ship uttered by Walt Whitman. In life too he was ever the Wound-Dresser, carrying wherever he went a healing, soothing influence to those who had fallen by the way.

But there was an actual war of fire and steel in which Whitman played a noble part—the only part that could have been played by one of the great Companions. Well had he said, in the “Song of Myself”:

“ I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on
their backs,”

for when the Civil War broke out in America he found himself amongst the suffering soldiers. He went to visit a brother and found there nothing but brothers. He stayed to tend them. For two years he devoted himself to the care of the wounded, as volunteer nurse, without pay. The experience permanently undermined his health, but not his optimism. It left him a rich sheaf of memories, and looking back afterwards, he could say with truth:

“ Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to
breathe his last,
This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourished,
rais'd, restor'd,
To life recalling many a prostrate form.”

To the sensitive nature of the Prophet, the years of the war were "hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted years," but as Wound-Dresser he found his true sphere. It was his

"To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the dead."

He makes no distinction between North and South. "Was one side so brave? The other was equally brave." While "the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on," he quietly does his work of mercy or keeps his vigil.

"Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought
in,
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass, the
ground,
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the
roof'd hospital,
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I
return,
To each and all one after another I draw near, not
one do I miss,
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a
refuse pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied,
and fill'd again.

" I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet un-
avoidable,
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy ! I
never knew you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die
for you, if that would save you."

What dramas—tragic, agonising dramas—
lie behind those simple " Drum-Taps " which
tell of Whitman's war experiences. He wrote
many letters for the soldiers—letters to mothers,
sisters and sweethearts, and we read the
story of one such letter in the poem which
begins :

" Come up from the fields, father, here's a letter from
our Pete,
And come to the front door, mother, here's a letter
from thy dear son."

The father comes, and the mother, and
quickly the envelope is opened. The writing
is in a strange hand ! All swims before the
stricken mother's eyes as she reads. Her son
is wounded in the breast, he is in hospital—
" at present low, but will soon be better." The
mother leans by the jamb of the door, and her
daughter speaks through her sobs: " Grieve

not so, dear mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better." But the Wound-Dresser, away in the hospital, already knows the end of the story.

" Alas, poor boy, he will never be better, (nor maybe needs to be better, that brave and simple soul,) While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,
The only son is dead.

" But the mother needs to be better,
She with the thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping, often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son."

For the Wound-Dresser in the hospital never loses his faith. When he looks at the soldiers he sees behind the mask of each " that wonder a kindred soul," and his thought is still :

" O the bullet could never kill what you really are,
dear friend,
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are."

Always it is the same thought—the kindred soul that makes all men brothers. These men

may fight and kill each other, but in them all the Prophet can see something which will one day bind them together into one great brotherhood. Let man but realise this kinship and it will surmount all boundaries and bridge all gulfs that separate one country from another. This link divine, once it becomes evident (and even now men are acquiring the habit of looking below uniforms and labels), will make war for ever impossible. Could we but look on all soldiers as Whitman does, there would cease to be any need for soldiers. Three dead soldiers lie on the ground, each covered with a blanket :

“ Curious I halt and silent stand,
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest,
the first, just lift the blanket,
Who are you, elderly man so gaunt and grim, with
well-gray'd hair, and flesh all sunken about the
eyes ?
Who are you, my dear comrade ?

“ Then to the second I step—and who are you, my
child and darling ?
Who are you, sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming ?

“ Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very
calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory ;
Young man, I think I know you—I think this face
is the face of the Christ himself,
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again
he lies.”

Is it any wonder that as the Wound-Dresser left the hospital late at night, the voices of soldiers could be heard calling: "Walt, Walt, Walt! Come again! Come again!" And is it any wonder that he can write:

"Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have
cross'd and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips,"

when he recalls the "experience sweet and sad"
of going back at night to his charges?

"Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the
hospitals,
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so
young,
Some suffer so much."

Then over the carnage there rises a voice prophetic. Not always shall men strive thus with each other. There must in the end come the healing of the greater wound which is the cause of wars. And the Prophet has salve for this wound too. He brings for it the word "Reconciliation":

"Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds and carnage
must in time be utterly lost,

That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world ;

For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,

I look where he lies white-faced and still in his coffin—I draw near,

Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin."

In death all are brothers. Two men may run each other through with bayonets, but as they die they will stretch out a hand to each other, and if we could see them in the Great Unknown perhaps they would be the closest of friends, drawn together by the discovery of their great mistake. In later years, when the Prophet sings a song to the "Ashes of Soldiers," it is the same thought that inspires him. He can chant his poem for "all dead soldiers South or North," for beyond the grave is reconciliation.

" Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the living—sweet are the musical voices sounding,
But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead with their silent eyes.

" Dearest comrades, all is over and long gone,
But love is not over—and what love, O Comrades ! "

And it is with the same message of love that the Prophet turns to the living, who are

exhorted to "give up for good" their deadly arms, and with other arms on other fields to wage the "saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars" of peace. He classes the "hell of war" with the "cruelties of creeds," and would sweep it away for ever. "Over the roofs of the world" sounds his "barbaric yawp":

"Away with themes of war! away with war itself!
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more
return that show of blacken'd, mutilated corpses!
That hell unpent and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers
or for lop-tongued wolves, not reasoning men,
And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,
With thy undaunted armies, engineering,
Thy pennants, labor, loosen'd to the breeze,
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear."

CHAPTER XIII

THE WORLD VIEW

“The field is the world.”—*Matt.* xiii. 38.

IF we study the teaching of the great prophets of the past we shall find much that is of world importance, when interpreted from the world point of view. Buddha, Lao Tsze, Christ, Mohammed, all had a world message. But all were at a disadvantage in this connection. To them the world was a comparatively small place bounded by unknown territory. They themselves were fettered by the ignorance of their age as to how the world came into being. Looking around they saw a few thousand, perhaps a few million people, and beyond them dark mysteries. Looking backward they saw, not far away, a definite beginning, and looking forward they pictured as definite an ending.

But now all this is changed. The dark places of the earth have been explored, peoples have been drawn together. Continents have been linked up with each other by methods

undreamt of by the prophets of old, and the world stands out definitely as one. The field of the prophet is now the world in a far wider sense than ever before, and the Prophet of the New Era, carrying forward the message of his great Companions, can spread his all-enclosing charity from pole to pole.

“Come, said the Muse,
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,
Sing me the universal.”

Leaves of Grass is the answer to the call of the universal Muse. In one of his early fancies the poet tells how, as he pondered in silence, a Phantom rose before him and in menacing voice asked :

“ . . . What singest thou ? . . .
Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-
enduring bards ?
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,
The making of perfect soldiers.”

And the poet answered :

“Be it so. . . .
I too, haughty Shade, also sing war, and a longer
and greater one than any,
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight,
advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and
wavering,

(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last,) the field the world,
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
I above all promote brave soldiers.”

That resolution the Prophet lives up to. Whatever he writes of, he writes of it from the world point of view. He seems to stand above the world with all its varied happenings, all its many sights and sounds, and there to think on how these things affect the human soul. The universe and the soul are the two great subjects of his poems.

“ I will not make poems with reference to parts,
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to ensemble,
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to all days,
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but has reference to the soul,
Because having look’d at the objects of the universe,
I find there is no one nor any particle of one but has reference to the soul.”

Everything is part of a great world scheme, a “ simple, compact, well-join’d scheme,” and the soul though disintegrated is part of the scheme. The long lists of occupations, sights,

sounds, and happenings, which form a stumbling-block to many, are but part of the Prophet's plan to embrace the whole world in his poems, and a careful examination of these passages will show how well Whitman succeeds in bringing together into a few lines the varied things of the earth. Would he show us the sights of the world? He seems to forget nothing, from the wild places of the earth where buffaloes roam, the wigwam and the backwoods village, to the vast cities with their ceaseless vehicles and their many-cylindere steam printing-presses and the electric telegraph stretching across continents. Would he have us know the happenings of this great universe? Here they are from those primitive scenes

“Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a
rock, where the otter is feeding on fish,
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by
the bayou,
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey,
where the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-
shaped tail,”

to the busy places of the earth where “the young fellow drives the express wagon,” and “the fare collector goes through the train giving notice of his approach by the jingling of loose change.” Would he have us listen to

the "voices of the universe"? We hear them all in his poems.

"Proud music of the storm,
Blast that careers so free, whistling across the
prairies,
Strong hum of forest tree-tops—wind of the moun-
tains . . .
You undertone of rivers, roar of pouring cataracts . . .
. . . airs antique and mediæval . . .
. . . great organ sounds . . .
. . . warbling birds, children that gambol and
play . . .

"Ah, from a little child,
Thou knowest, soul, how to me all sounds became
music,
My mother's voice in lullaby or hymn, . . .
The rain, the growing corn, the breeze among the
long-leav'd corn,
The measur'd sea-surf beating on the sand,
The twittering bird, the hawk's sharp scream,
The wild-fowl's notes at night as flying low migrat-
ing north or south,
The psalm in the country church or mid the
clustering trees. . . .
The fiddler in the tavern, the glee, the long-strung
sailor-song,
The lowing cattle, bleating sheep, the crowing cock
at dawn.

"All songs of current lands . . .
. . . odes, symphonies, operas, . . .
. . . the dance-music of all nations . . .

"Give me to hold all sounds,
Fill me with all the voices of the universe."

Again when Whitman thinks of Time and Space they both are endless—and without beginning. He doubts not that he has "died ten thousand times before"; the sight of a strange face sometimes makes him wonder:

"I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,"

and at another time he cries:

"O to realise space!
The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,
To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon
and flying clouds, as one of them."

His longing is for

"Something far away from a puny and pious life!"

He would say, at all times:

"The east and west are mine, and the north and south are mine,"

and is ever concerned that his words shall not become the property of "some coterie," or the basis of "some school or mere religion." He must speak always for "the whole People." His three peerless stars are "Ensemble, Evolu-

tion, Freedom—set in the sky of Law.” He would be “a sailor of the world bound for all ports,” for whether he looks at the peoples of the earth with their many creeds and languages or the different worlds themselves, he sees that

“A vast similitude interlocks all. . . .

This vast similitude spans them, and always has
spann’d,

And shall for ever span them and compactly hold
and enclose them.”

The world is one,

“The earth does not argue,

Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,

Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable
failures,

Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,

Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts
none out.”

Then why should the world’s Prophet draw lines and make boundaries? This “great round wonder rolling through space” must be greeted as a single entity :

“Health to you ! good will to you all ! . . .

“My spirit has pass’d in compassion and determination around the whole earth,

I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them
ready for me in all lands,
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with
them."

That remarkable parable which bears the title, "Passage to India," is Whitman's great song of world unity. The New Era must see a new consciousness arise. Men and women must become citizens of the world with a great and growing love for their new "country."

"Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in
marriage,
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together."

In the "year at whose wide-flung door" the Prophet sings there is to be a "marriage of continents, climates and oceans."

"Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New
World,
The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding
a festival garland,
As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand."

And then the future! A bright and glowing time ahead for this old world when it has learnt its lesson. In one of his poems, again a parable,

the Prophet speaks of America, "Thou Mother with thy Equal Brood," but as we read on we find that America is only a symbol for the United States of the World.

"Thou globe of globes ! thou wonder nebulous ! . . .
Thou mental, moral orb—thou New, indeed new,
Spiritual World !
The Present holds thee not—for such vast growth
as thine,
For such unparallel'd flight as thine, such brood as
thine,
The Future only holds thee and can hold thee."

CHAPTER XIV

THE FLAG OF MAN : HOURS PROPHETIC

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.”—*Matt.* vii. 12.

WHEN Confucius was asked by one of his disciples to sum up his teaching in one word, the great Chinese Master gave the word “Charity,” and proceeded from that word to enunciate the Golden Rule. Christ, perhaps in answer to a similar question, gave the same great rule as the substance of his message to the people. There is nothing astonishing in this coincidence, for a little thought will prove that the Golden Rule is the basic principle of all real religion. It puts in a nutshell the message of the great Companions.

If we turn to the first “Inscription” of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* we shall find there two lines which sum up the message of the Prophet of the New Era :

“One’s-self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.”

Man and his relationship to his fellows is to be the Prophet's subject, and his definition of the word "Democratic" is this :

"I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,

By God ! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms."

Again the Golden Rule. The Democracy of the New Era is to be founded on this impregnable rock, and in spite of the "treacherous lip smiles everywhere," Whitman, with true vision, can see this Democracy as "the destin'd conqueror." He will sing its praises as no other bard has ever sung them. He will "shake out carols stronger and haughtier than have ever yet been heard upon earth."

"Democracy ! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating itself and joyfully singing."

He remembers "those who in any land have died for the good cause," and warns all kings and priests that the seed of such martyr's blood, though spare, will never run out.

"Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom but grows seed for freedom, in its turn to bear seed,
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the snows nourish.

“Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants
let loose,

But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering,
counselling, cautioning.

“Liberty, let others despair of you—I never despair
of you.”¹²

The Prophet's rule for the people of all
countries is, “Resist much, obey little,” and
all his sympathies are with the “dauntless rebel
the world over.” Through all the persecutions
and tyranny of the world, past and present,
he can see breaking the light of liberation.

“The battle rages with many a loud alarm and fre-
quent advance and retreat,

The infidel triumphs, or supposes he triumphs,

The prison, scaffold, garroté, handcuffs, iron neck-
lace and lead-balls do their work,

The named and unnamed heroes pass to other
spheres,

The great speakers and writers are exiled, they lie
sick in distant lands,

The cause is asleep, the strongest throats are choked
with their own blood,

The young men droop their eyelashes toward the
ground when they meet ;

But for all this Liberty has not gone out of the place,
nor the infidel enter'd into full possession.

“When liberty goes out of a place it is not the first
to go, nor the second or third to go,

It waits for all the rest to go, it is the last.”

Walt Whitman is a great believer in men. He sees humanity at its best—as what it might be. He is filled with an all-enclosing sympathy for those who are struggling upward, and says boldly that “whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral—drest in his shroud.” He speaks for the divine average, and would bring “freedom for every slave on the face of the earth.” Looking out over the world he sees men of all nations who are ready to join hands in building up the New Democracy.

“This moment yearning and thoughtful sitting
alone,
It seems to me there are other men in other lands
yearning and thoughtful,
It seems to me I can look over and behold them in
Germany, Italy, France, Spain,
Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or Japan
talking other dialects,
And it seems to me if I could know those men I
should become attached to them as I do to men
in my own lands,
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.”

True comradeship will be the basis of the New Democracy. It will be seen on every hand. There will be justice there, the natural justice

that follows the application of the Golden Rule :

“ . . . as if Justice could be anything but the same
ample law, expounded by natural judges and
saviors,

As if it might be this thing or that thing, according
to decisions.”

There will be Equality ; again, the equality that
follows naturally from the same application :

‘ . . . as if it harm’d me, giving others the same
chances and rights as myself—as if it were not
indispensable to my own rights that others
possess the same.”

There will be equality and co-operation between
the sexes, for Whitman is “ poet of the woman
the same as the man,” and claims that it is just
“ as great to be a woman as to be a man.”

“ The wife, and she is not one jot less than the
husband,

The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,
The mother, and she is every bit as much as the
father.”

There will be work for all, for Whitman would
“ teach the average man the glory of his daily
walk and trade,”

“ To sing in songs how exercise and chemical life are
never to be baffled,

To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig,

To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetables,
flowers,
For every man to see to it that he really do some-
thing, for every woman too."

The New Democracy is the Prophet's "great Idea," and when he sees in his vision "the rising forever, taller and stronger and broader, of the institutions of men and women," his world is peopled by a new race.

"Strong and sweet shall their tongues be, poems and
materials of poems shall come from their lives,
they shall be makers and finders,
Of them and of their works shall emerge divine
conveyers, to convey gospels."

The duty of the prophet is to interpret God to man, to give forth a message to the people of his generation, but it has often happened that the prophet has looked into the future and has there seen something of coming events. To Walt Whitman, too, there came such prophetic hours, and looking into the "years of the unperform'd," he says:

"Your horizon rises, I see it parting away for more
august dramas,
I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation
but other nations preparing,
I see tremendous entrances and exits, new combina-
tions, the solidarity of races,

I see that force advancing with irresistible power on
the world's stage. . . .

I see Freedom, completely arm'd and victorious and
very haughty, with Law on one side and Peace
on the other,

A stupendous trio all issuing forth against the idea
of caste ;

What historic denouements are these we so rapidly
approach ?

I see men marching and countermarching by swift
millions,

I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aris-
tocracies broken,

I see the landmarks of European kings removed,

I see this day the People beginning their landmarks
(all others give way) ;

Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this
day,

Never was average man, his soul, more energetic,
more like a God,

Lo, how he urges and urges leaving the masses no
rest !

His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere, he
colonizes the Pacific, the archipelagoes,

With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the
newspaper, the wholesale engines of war,

With these and the world-spreading factories he
interlinks all geography, all lands ;

What whispers are these, O lands, running ahead of
you, passing under the seas ?

Are all nations communing ? is there going to be
but one heart to the globe ?

Is humanity forming en-masse ? for lo, tyrants
tremble, crowns grow dim,

The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a
general divine war,
No one knows what will happen next, such portents
fill the days and nights ;
Years prophetic! the space ahead as I walk, as I
vainly try to pierce it is full of phantoms . . .
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, re-
tiring in shadow behind me,
The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance,
advance upon me."

Such was the Prophet's vision—a dream of
stirring events, trying times, birth-throes of a
new age and, beyond all, his "great Idea."
For in face of the "fading kingdoms and kings,
with the fading religions and priests," he never
loses sight of "the flag of man."

"Dream'd again the flag of kings, highest borne, to
flaunt unrival'd ?
O hasten flag of man—O with sure and steady step,
passing highest flags of kings,
Walk supreme to the heavens' mighty symbol—run
up above them all."

CHAPTER XV

CHANGES OF GARMENTS

“But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them . . .”—
Luke xi. 17.

ONE of the most striking things about the world's great teachers has always been their ability to divine the thoughts of others—to put themselves in another man's place, and thus to look at things from his point of view. It is just as if they had themselves experienced all the gamut of thought and emotion to which the human mind and heart can respond, and so have been able to meet on level ground all types of men and women, from the most unlettered to the most learned. This faculty is the secret of the wide tolerance that has always characterised the great ones of the earth.

And it was exactly the same faculty, developed in a very high degree, that enabled Walt Whitman to write of what might be called the inner life of so vast a diversity of men and women. Running through all he sees one

definite purpose, and he can say with perfect truth that he is

“Pleas’d with the native and pleas’d with the foreign,
 pleas’d with the new and old,
 Pleas’d with the homely woman as well as the handsome,
 Pleas’d with the Quakeress as she puts off her bonnet,
 and talks melodiously,
 Pleas’d with the tune of the choir of the white-wash’d church,
 Pleas’d with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher, impress’d seriously at the camp-meeting.”

Which is only another way of saying that all these have a place in the great scheme.

Looking back over the history of the world’s religions, the Prophet does not despise those priests of old who were acting up to the light within them. His faith is vast and encloses all “worship, ancient and modern, and all between ancient and modern.” He can picture himself in certain circumstances

“Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods,
 saluting the sun,
 Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing
 with sticks in the circle of obis,
 Helping the lama or brahmin as he trims the lamps
 of the idols,

Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admirant, minding the Koran,
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing assuredly that he is divine,
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently in a pew,
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till my spirit arouses me."

Which, again, is only another way of saying that these things too had a place in the scheme of things, leading up slowly but surely to the religion of the New Era.

It is the same faculty of "knowing their thoughts" that enables Whitman to understand so fully the meaning of suffering.

"I understand the large hearts of heroes,
The courage of present times and all times,
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the steamship, and Death chasing it up and down the storm,
How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was faithful of days and faithful of nights,
And chalk'd in large letters on a board, "Be of good cheer, we will not desert you";
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days and would not give it up

How he saved the drifting company at last,
 How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when
 boated from the side of their prepared graves,
 How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick,
 and the sharp-lipp'd unshaved men ;
 All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it
 becomes mine,
 I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there."

And in other ways the Prophet suffers too.
 He takes on his shoulders the cruelty of a cruel
 world. He feels through his body the agonies
 of his many brothers. He knows the pain and
 suffering that come to his countless sisters.

" The disdain and calmness of martyrs,
 The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt
 with dry wood, her children gazing on,
 The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by
 the fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat,
 The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck,
 the murderous buckshot and the bullets,
 All these I feel or am. . . .

" Agonies are one of my changes of garments,
 I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I
 myself become the wounded person,
 My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane
 and observe.

" I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,
 Tumbling walls buried me in their debris. . . .

“ . . . I am possess'd !

Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,
See myself in prison shaped like another man,
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

“ For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and keep watch.

It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

“ Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd to him and walk by his side. . . .

“ Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and am tried and sentenced.

“ Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie at the last gasp,

My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me people retreat.

“ Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in them,

I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.”

Whitman can see beneath the surface. He knows that things are not always what they appear outwardly to the eye. He knows some of high position and wealth who are passing “ unwittingly the true realities of life ” and going always towards false realities. He can see them “ gaunt and naked . . . alive after what custom has served them and nothing more . . .

sad, hasty, unwaked somnambules walking in the dusk."

But Whitman has other "changes of garments," and many of his poems—*e.g.* "The Sleepers," and "A Song of Joys"—are examples of how he can put himself in another man's place. In the former he wanders in his vision, "bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of the sleepers," and many things he tells us of those whose eyes are closed.

"I go from bedside to bedside, I sleep close with the
other sleepers each in turn,
I dream in my dream all the dreams of the other
dreamers,
And I become the other dreamers."

Sleep, it seems to the Prophet, is a great leveller, and as he thinks of the many sleeping forms—the criminal and the judge, the perfect-formed and the sick, the laughter and the weeper, the affectionate boy, the husband and wife, and the consumptive, the idiot and the wronged—there comes the beautiful thought :

"I swear they are averaged now—one is no better
than the other,
The night and sleep have liken'd them and restored
them.

"I swear they are all beautiful,
Everyone that sleeps is beautiful."

Behind the varied bodies he sees the soul, and

“ The soul is always beautiful,
The universe is duly in order, every thing is in its
place,
What has arrived is in its place and what waits shall
be in its place.”

In “ A Song of Joys,” the Prophet dons his gayest garments, for he would make a “ jubilant song, full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy.” Again he puts himself in the place of others and it becomes obvious that he knows their thoughts.

“ O the engineer’s joys ! to go with a locomotive !
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the
steam-whistle, the laughing locomotive !
To push with resistless way and speed off in the
distance.

“ O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides !
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the
moist fresh stillness of the woods,
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and
all through the forenoon. . . .

“ O the fireman’s joys !
I hear the alarm at dead of night,
I hear bells, shouts ! I pass the crowd, I run !
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.”

And so on, through a long range of those joys which make the earth such a great place for a

true man or woman—the man or woman who has experienced the joy of self-hood, which lies behind all Whitman's "changes of garments." For if ever a human being knew what it was to reach the joy of complete self-hood, that being was the Prophet of the New Era.

" O the joy of a manly self-hood !
To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any
tyrant known or unknown,
To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and
elastic,
To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,
To speak with a full sonorous voice out of a broad
chest,
To confront with your personality all the other
personalities of the earth. . . .

" O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave !
To meet life as a powerful conqueror ! "

CHAPTER XVI

THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”—*Matt.* xxv. 40.

OF all the great teachers of the old world, the gentle Buddha gave us the widest doctrine of brotherhood, for he included in his all-embracing compassion those younger brethren we call animals.

“Kill not, for pity’s sake, and lest ye slay
The meanest creature on its upward way.”

In this connection Walt Whitman is his natural successor, for to him the phrase, “the least of these my brethren,” would include all animals, from the meanest creature upwards, all little children, and depraved men and women—idiots, criminals, prostitutes.

When Whitman felt that he could “turn and live with animals” it was because they showed him their relationship to himself; they brought him tokens of himself.

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“The sharp-hoof’d moose of the north, the cat on the
house-sill, the chickadee, the prairie dog,
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her
teats,
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-
spread wings,
I see in them and myself the same old law.”

Children loved the Prophet, and his love for them is shown in the note of sweetness that always appears with his mention of the little ones.

“Children at play, or on his father’s lap a young boy
fallen asleep (how his lips move! how he smiles
in his sleep!).”

And again :

“The little one sleeps in its cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently
brush away flies with my hand.”

And it is exactly this same note of sweet gentleness that we find whenever he refers to those other “little ones”—the yet undeveloped souls whom men call lunatics and sinners :

“The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm’d case,
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot
in his mother’s bedroom).”

And of the prostitute he says :

“ Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the
leaves to rustle for you, do my words refuse to
glisten and rustle for you.”

They and such as they must never be shut out
from the poems of the Prophet of the New Era.

“ This is the meal equally set, this is the meat for
natural hunger,
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous,
I make appointments with all,
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is
invited ;
There shall be no difference between them and the
rest. . . .

“ Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners
and slaves,
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves
and dwarfs. . . .
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung. . . .

“ To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.”

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Thus it happens that when Whitman greets the world with its teeming millions of people he does not forget the least of these his brethren :

“ I see all the menials of the earth, laboring,
I see all the prisoners in the prisons,
I see the defective human bodies of the earth,
The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks,
lunatics,
The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-
makers of the earth,
The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and
women.”

And he does not forget the younger races—the Hottentot, the Greenlander, the Patagonian and the Feejeeman—away back where they stand, for he is certain that in due time they will come forward to his side. All are travelling the same great open road, all are for ever pressing forward, and in due time all will arrive.

“ They go ! they go ! I know that they go, but I
know not where they go,
But I know that they go toward the best—toward
something great.”

In imagination the Prophet looks back to the time when he passed their way.

“ Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,
I am he who knew what it was to be evil,

I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly,
and malignant,
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous
wish, not wanting,
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness,
none of these wanting,
Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the
rest."

The younger brethren are but the "followers in embryo" who wait behind. They are but the laggards in the great race of life, and all will finally be perfected, for the Prophet sees, working through the universe, a great law by which the good is "steadily hastening towards immortality," and the evil is "hastening to merge itself and become lost and dead." He can look with a confident faith on the most backward of his brothers and say :

"I saw the face of the most smear'd and slobbering
idiot they had at the asylum,
And I knew for my consolation what they knew not,
I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my
brother,
The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen
tenement,

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And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,
And I shall meet the real landlord perfect and un-
harm'd, every inch as good as myself.

“ The Lord advances, and yet advances,
Always the shadow in front, always the reach'd
hand bringing up the laggards.”

Is it by accident or design that Whitman turns from addressing “ Him that was Crucified,” to speak words of cheer to “ You Felons on Trial in Courts,” and to extend his all-embracing love “ To a Common Prostitute ” ? Was not the Nazarene also the lover of Mary Magdalene and the friend of the woman taken in adultery ? There is an echo, too, of the words of Jesus about the first and the last in the little poem, “ Reversals ” :

“ Let that which stood in front go behind,
Let that which was behind advance to the front,
Let bigots, fools, unclean persons, offer new propositions.
Let the old propositions be postponed,
Let a man seek pleasure everywhere except in himself,
Let a woman seek happiness everywhere except in herself.”

True happiness comes from unselfishness,
and not a single act done for others is lost, for

the one who does it is raised thereby to a higher level of being. This is the certain result of

“ All the brave actions of war and peace,
All help given to relatives, strangers, the poor, old,
sorrowful, young children, widows, the sick, and
to shunn'd persons,
All self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks,
and saw others fill the seats of the boats,
All offering of substance or life for the good old
cause, or for a friend's sake, or opinion's sake,
All pains of enthusiasts scoff'd at by their
neighbors,
All the limitless sweet love and precious suffering
of mothers.”

There is nothing lost in a world that is ruled by law. Everything moves steadily forward, and it is Whitman's aim to make clear to us this tendency of all things towards the best, for once we grasp this truth the riddles of the universe are solved.

“ Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,
High in the purer, happier air.

“ From imperfection's murkiest cloud,
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of heaven's glory.

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“ To fashion’s, custom’s discord,
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

“ O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,
Along the mighty labyrinth.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE VEILED GLORY

“ But he spake of the temple of his body.”—*John* ii. 21.

THE temple of the body ! What a beautiful phrase ! The human form, itself so beautiful that it has been made the subject of countless pictures by the world's greatest artists, as the temple or tenement of something that transcends it—as the house of the soul. A carefully prepared house, too. A house that has been built cell by cell, with such infinite care that it defies the elements for three-score years and ten. A house that has its real beginnings in plans made by the Great Artificer millions of years ago, and that has been slowly but surely improved throughout all time until it stands to-day as the greatest work of God in the physical universe. The temple of the body !

And yet, so some would have us believe, the foundations of that temple are laid in sin, and the house is shapen in iniquity. There is

something to be ashamed of in the laying of those foundations, and the building of the house must be hidden away from the eyes of the world beneath a conspiracy of silence.

Walt Whitman will not tolerate such a state of affairs. He has "seen the sleeping babe nestling the breast of its mother":

"The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them
long and long."

He has sung, in his "Song of Joys":

"O the mother's joys!

The watching, the endurance, the precious love,
the anguish, the patiently yielded life."

And must he, when he looks back to the beginning of the building of that little temple, to the time when the first stone was laid, become suddenly silent? Never! He will sing songs of joy for that too. Through him shall be heard forbidden voices. From the veiled voices of sexes he will remove the veil. He will clarify and transfigure voices that hitherto have been thought indecent. He will sing of "physiology from top to toe."

"Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy
for the Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier
far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing."

And thus it is that *Leaves of Grass* includes the much-disputed poems, "Children of Adam," with their intimate descriptions of the "form complete."

"The man's body is sacred, and the woman's body is sacred,
No matter who it is, it is sacred. . . .

"If anything is sacred the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of
manhood untainted,
And in man or woman, a clean, strong, firm-fibred
body is more beautiful than the most beautiful
face."

The Prophet has considered the body and has found all the organs and parts good. The Great Artificer has made no mistake, as some would have us suppose. He has not introduced into our natures, at their very origin, a thing of evil :

"Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and
of any man hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and
none shall be less familiar than the rest."

The "birds and animals never once skulk or find themselves indecent." Then why should man? Must there be times in a man's or a woman's life when, to quote one of Whit-

man's disciples, it is necessary to say to the soul: "Soul, look another way—you have no part in this. Motherhood is beautiful, fatherhood is beautiful, but the dawn of fatherhood and motherhood is not beautiful." Not for a moment will the Prophet of the New Era agree to such a standard of conduct. Too long has humanity been fooled by those who would claim that there is something unclean about the natural functioning of the sex organs.

"I accept reality, and dare not question it."

There is beauty here as in everything connected with the natural human body, and the man and woman who see ugliness are missing something which might help them immeasurably. They are cutting off part of their life at the roots, for the soul is firmly rooted in the body and draws its sustenance from that source.

"O the life of my senses and flesh, transcending my senses and flesh!"

How can the soul reach such heights if its roots are embedded in impurity? But it is all a mistake—a tragic mistake for many—and Walt Whitman would clear away for ever the

hideous misconceptions that have gathered around the very foundations of our lives.

“ And sexual organs and acts ! do you concentrate in me, for I am determin’d to tell you with courageous clear voice to prove you illustrious, And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present and can be none in the future, And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn’d to beautiful results.”

The laying of the foundations of the temple of the body is an “act divine,” and in the poems of Walt Whitman it must be celebrated as such. It is a poem in itself, like the pairing of the birds, or the planting of seeds in the fertile earth.

“ Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex,
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.”

The body is all beautiful, all wondrous, and the limbs and “the quivering fire that ever plays through them” are most wonderful of all. The love of husband for wife and wife for husband, with all that it means, becomes one of the most elevating forces in the world, and out of “the oath of inseparableness” which binds them together may arise a vision of a

greater unity. So certainly does flesh help soul.

“ I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part
and tag of me is a miracle,

“ Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy what-
ever I touch or am touch'd from.”

The passionate love of the sexes leaves a lasting impression on the mind and the soul—something to be remembered when all else is forgotten. And shall that impression be one of evil? Shall there be a lingering trail of slime for ever round the man and woman who have experienced “ that mystic deliria ” which for the time made them one. Again the Prophet cries: “ Never ! ” Those moments shall be remembered with a tender and lasting joy.

“ Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting
my brain for future use with its shows, architec-
ture, customs, traditions,
Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman
I casually met there who detain'd me for love of
me,
Day by day and night by night we were together—
all else has long been forgotten by me,
I remember I say only that woman who passionately
clung to me,

Again we wander, we love, we separate again,
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and
tremulous.¹²

There is a little parable amongst the
"Inscriptions" which form the first chapter
of *Leaves of Grass* that has a direct bearing on
what Whitman says of the body and of sex:

"Shut not your doors to me, proud libraries,
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd
shelves, yet needed most, I bring,
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every-
thing,
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt
by the intellect,
But you, ye untold latencies, will thrill to every
page."¹³

Too much attention, as the Prophet evidently
anticipated, has been paid to the words, and
too little to the drift of the book, which is
everything. And the drift of Whitman's words
on the question of sex is this. Veil these
matters if you will (for Whitman himself has
carefully veiled them behind much beautiful
imagery) but let that veiling be because of their
transcendent glory, not as in the past because
of some fancied ugliness. Here as in all things

it is the abuse not the use that is sinful and ugly,
and in the New Democracy, the City of Friends,
the New Era, there will be a place of honour
for the human body in its "form complete."

"Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,
There the great city stands."

CHAPTER XVIII

YE DOWNCAST HOURS: A SOUL EXCEEDING SORROWFUL

“And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.”—*Mark* i. 13.

“And he . . . began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.”—*Mark* xiv. 33, 34.

THE great ones have all had their moments of temptation, and their hours of sorrow and anguish. No soul ever rose to the heights of faith but had first been down in depths of doubt and despair. We can only surmise as to the actual nature of the temptations in the case of the prophets of old for the stories of these times of trial have come down to us in a legendary form. The great Companions are brought face to face with a personification of evil. Zoroaster must triumph over the wiles of Angro Mainyus, who offers to make him “the ruler of the nations.” Buddha is faced with Mara, the Prince of Evil, who will make him “an emperor of the world, riding over the

four great continents." Christ is tempted of Satan with the promise of "all the kingdoms of the earth."

But behind these dramatic legends there are very real temptations, and a study of Walt Whitman from the same point of view will perhaps throw some light on their actual character.

The aim, the ideal, of the Prophet of the New Era is to be imperturbable, "standing at ease in Nature, master of all":

"To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do."

But there are times when this ideal cannot be reached. There come hours of doubt:

"Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations
after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful
fable only,
May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants,
men, hills, shining and flowing waters,
The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms,
may-be these are only apparitions."

And there are times when the Prophet, looking around on the "endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the foolish," and

thinking of the "plodding and sordid crowds," of "the objects mean," of "the empty and useless years," of "the poor results of all," is tempted to ask the sad, recurring question:

"What good amid these, O me, O life?"

Another temptation, too, assails the Prophet, as he thinks of the catastrophes of life—of a ship that left port "with flying streamers and wafted kisses," and was soon afterwards wrecked. "A huge sob—a few bubbles—the white foam spirting up"—and all is over. And then the questions:

"Are souls drown'd and destroy'd so?
Is only matter triumphant?"

Yes, the Prophet knows well these times of doubt and trial. As a rule his faith is firm, and the future certain:

"Yet, yet, ye downcast hours, I know ye also,
Weights of lead, how ye clog and cling at my ankles,
Earth to a chamber of mourning turns—I hear the
o'erweening, mocking voice,
'Matter is conqueror—matter, triumphant only,
continues onward.'"

At such times as these we get very near to the Prophet's great heart. It has ever been so. We come closest to the great ones in their

hours of sorrow—to Jesus in Gethsemane, “sore amazed” and with heavy heart, his “soul exceeding sorrowful unto death,” praying, “Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me”—to Jeremiah crying out in his anguish, “The harvest is passed and the summer is ended, and we are not saved! Is there no balm in Gilead? Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people! Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place that I might leave my people and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.” And to Walt Whitman, when he cries:

“That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows
of the bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own
crucifixion and bloody crowning.”

He is thinking of those downcast hours:

“Hours continuing long, sore and heavy-hearted,
Hours of dusk, when I withdraw to a lonesome and
unfrequented spot, seating myself, leaning my
face in my hands;
Hours sleepless, deep in the night, when I go forth,
speeding swiftly the country roads, or through
the city streets, or pacing miles and miles, stifling
plaintive cries;

Hours discourag'd, distract'd—for the one I cannot
content myself without, soon I saw him content
himself without me ;

Hours when I am forgotten (O weeks and months
are passing, but I believe I am never to forget !)
Sullen and suffering hours ! (I am ashamed—but
it is useless—I am what I am ;)

Hours of my torment—I wonder if other men ever
have the like, out of the like feelings ?

Is there even one like me—distract'd—his friend,
his lover, lost to him ?

Is he too as I am now ? Does he still rise in the
morning, dejected, thinking who is lost to him ?
and at night, awaking, think who is lost ?

Does he too harbor his friendship silent and endless ?
harbor his anguish and passion ?

Does some stray reminder, or the casual mention of
a name, bring the fit back upon him, taciturn and
deprest ?

Does he see himself reflected in me ? In these
hours does he see the face of his hours reflected ? ”

We can picture the Prophet in these down-
cast hours walking by the sea, and his words
take on a new meaning :

“ O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open
my mouth,
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes
recoil upon me I have not once had the least idea
who or what I am,

But that before all my arrogant poems the real
Me stands yet untouch'd, untold, altogether
unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock congratulatory signs and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word
I have written,
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand beneath.
I perceive I have not really understood any thing,
not a single object, and that no man ever can,
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of
me to dart upon me and sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all."

But the triumph always comes. Maybe the Prophet found new strength in communing with the Source of Strength. Maybe the prayer he puts into the mouth of Columbus is his own prayer. For was not he, too, a Columbus sailing ever for new continents?

"I am too full of woe!

Haply I may not live another day;

I cannot rest, O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,

Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with Thee,

Report myself once more to Thee."

Whitman begins to see a purpose "even in

being foil'd, in defeat, poverty, misconception, imprisonment—for they too are great.”

“ Did we think victory great ?

So it is—but now it seems to me, when it cannot be
help'd, that defeat is great,
And that death and dismay are great.”

For all lead towards ultimate victory, when
the true Self shall triumph.

“ The real or fancied indifference of some man or
woman I love,

The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-
doing or loss or lack of money, or depressions
or exaltations,

Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of
doubtful news, the fitful events ;

These come to me days and nights and go from me
again,

But they are not the Me myself.”

Behind all the “poverties, wincings and sulky
retreats,” behind all degradations, tussles with
passions and appetites, smarts from dissatisfied
friendships, meannesses and broken resolutions,
stands the real Self and it can say with con-
fidence :

“ Ah, think not that you finally triumph, my real self
has yet to come forth,

It shall yet march forth o'ermastering, till all lies
beneath me,

It shall yet stand up the soldier of ultimate victory.”

And it is the touch of love that soonest
brings this renewed faith, that answers or
silences all questions, that banishes all doubts.

“ To me these and the like of these are curiously
answer'd by my lovers, my dear friends,
When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long
while holding me by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that
words and reason hold not, surround us and
pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable
wisdom, I am silent, I require nothing further,
I cannot answer the question of appearances or that
of identity beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied.
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.”

CHAPTER XIX

SAILING THE SEAS OF GOD : THE TASK ETERNAL

“The end is not yet.”—*Matt.* xxiv. 6.

WHEN the Prophet of Nazareth lived his short but eventful life in Palestine, the age of the world was counted in hundreds of years, and men looked forward confidently to a time not very far distant when it would be no more. Short views were the rule, and excursions into the realms of Time and Space were but timid ventures—like the explorations of children around the doorstep of their home, or the canoe trips of boys to the tiny bays and creeks of a small lake.

But now we think in millions. Science has opened up to us a vast stretch of Time which reaches back into the mists of Nothingness and forward into the dim Unknown Eternity. We hear of countless other worlds like ours and of a million suns hanging in Space. There are whispers of yet greater secrets to be unfolded, unheard-of powers to be let loose, and beyond

those—still more. Never was there a time when we needed so much to learn the great lesson that “the end is not yet.” We must leave the doorstep and the tiny bays and creeks of the little lake for the open seas—the seas of God—and there strike out boldly. The Prophet of the New Era has given us a book that will help us in our “task eternal.”

“Speed on, my book! spread your white sails, my
little bark, athwart the imperious waves,
Chant on, sail on, bear o’er the boundless blue from
me to every sea,
This song for mariners and all their ships.”

Whitman is not only a pioneer himself, but an inspirer of pioneers. He would have everyone feel the urge which spurs men on to newer, better worlds.

“Piety and conformity to them that like,
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like,
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women,
nations,
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your
lives!

“I am he who walks the States with a barb’d tongue,
questioning every one I meet,
Who are you that wanted only to be told what you
knew before?
Who are you that wanted only a book to join you
in your nonsense?”

He would stir men up to a realisation of the fact that truth is marching on and that there is a danger of being left behind. Creeds, bibles, gods are but milestones in the forward march, to be constantly left behind, exchanged for better creeds, bibles and gods, and those who dream that they have reached finality have somehow got away from the main road into a cul-de-sac. To expect progress after one has formulated a final creed, or said of a certain book: "This is the last word of God," is as foolish as to expect to reach the summit of a mountain after having carefully tied oneself with a strong chain to an iron stake at its foot.

"Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of
the past,
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of
the past,
From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs
of kings, slavery, caste,
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to
come—give up that backward world. . . .
. . . turn your undying face,
To where the future, greater than all the past,
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you."

Whitman "initiates the true use of precedents." They are there, not to be followed, but to be surpassed by new methods more fitted for new days. He is a great believer in what is yet

to come and would "lead the present with friendly hand towards the future," which he can see "advancing, absorbing the present, transcending the past." He can see before him an age which shall possess "no single bible, savior merely," but "saviors countless and bibles incessant, equal to any, divine as any," an age in which "he or she is greatest who contributes the greatest original, practical example."

Already he can visualise a time when

"People's lips salute only doers, lovers, satisfiers,
positive knowers,
There will shortly be no more priests, I say their
work is done."

For priests always belong to those who claim to have reached finality. They gather the chosen few around them in their little cul-de-sac and cry: "Here we are at the end of the journey, our search after truth is ended, let others go farther at their peril!"

There are no fences, no forbidden boundaries, on the open road—the road for travelling souls:

"Afoot and light-hearted I take the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I
choose.

"Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am
good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more,
need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous
criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road."

And there are no final resting-places, only inns
where the traveller may find rest and refresh-
ment.

"*Allons !* we must not stop here,
However sweet these laid-up stores, however con-
venient this dwelling, we cannot remain here,
However shelter'd this port and however calm these
waters we must not anchor here,
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us
we are permitted to receive it but a little while. . . .

"*Allons !* from all formules !
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic
priests."

Instead of the comfortable creeds of the
priests and the hindering dogmas of those who
would make each rest-house the end of the
journey, we must take the wide views of the
pioneer :

"To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach
it and pass it,
To conceive no time, however distant, but what
you may reach it and pass it,

SAILING THE SEAS OF GOD 183

To look up or down no road but it stretches and
waits for you, however long but it stretches and
waits for you."

To those who are settling down with the
priests and creeds in the house by the way, he
cries :

"Whoever you are, come forth ! or man or woman,
come forth !

You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in
the house, though you built it, or though it has
been built for you."

Every forward step reveals another to be
taken ; every success means a further struggle
made necessary, but ahead on the same road
the great Companions beckon us and all are
saying with Walt Whitman :

" *Allons !* the road is before us !

It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried
it well—be not detain'd !

Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and
the book on the shelf unopen'd !

Let the tools remain in the workshop ! let the money
remain unearn'd !

Let the school stand ! mind not the cry of the
teacher !

Let the preacher preach in his pulpit ! let the lawyer
plead in the court, and the judge expound the
law.

“Camerado, I give you my hand !
I give you my love more precious than money,
I give you myself before preaching or law ;
Will you give me yourself ? will you come travel
with me ?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live ? ”

Such are the rules of the open road which is travelled by the pioneers—those adventurous and daring persons who are ever founding new cities. In them is seen at its best

“The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on themselves.”

And to them Whitman writes his great poem, “Pioneers ! O Pioneers !” They are the leaders and “must bear the brunt of danger.” For them it is “the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,” but there is a great duty before them and they must never look back. The little footpath they are making will one day be the great highway along which all the world will travel.

“See, my children, resolute children,
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield
or falter,
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind
us urging,
Pioneers ! O pioneers ! ”

The pioneer is always closer to God than the priest. He is more sensitive to the finer tendencies of the age in which he lives and can read God's messages with clearer eyes. He can say with Whitman :

" O I am sure they really came from Thee,
The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than
words,
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even
in sleep,
These sped me on."

His is "the immortal ship," and on and on
it goes, sailing "pathless and wild seas . . .
where winds blow, waves dash" :

" Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyag-
ing, voyaging."

And ever the impelling voice within cries :

" Away, O soul ! hoist instantly the anchor !
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail !
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long
enough ?
Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and
drinking like mere brutes ?
Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with
books long enough ?

“ Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou
with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared
to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

“ O my brave soul !
O farther, farther sail !
O daring joy, but safe ! are they not all the seas of
God ?
O farther, farther, farther sail ! ”

CHAPTER XX

SONGS OF PARTING

“Lo, I am with you alway.”—*Matt.* xxviii. 20.

THERE comes a time when the great Companions must leave the world, when they must part from their little bands of followers. Having breathed forth love so long they have begun to identify themselves with that love—to speak of themselves as love, compassion, comradeship, and thus it is that they are able to say to those who remain behind: “Lo, I am with you alway.” Always will the love of Jesus and the gentle compassion of Gautama Buddha brood over the earth. And always will the spirit of comradeship that was in Walt Whitman remain with the world. For he, too, has given his promise:

“To one a century hence or any number of centuries
hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.
When you read these I that was visible am become
invisible,

Now it is you, compact, visible, realising my poems,
seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with
you and become your comrade ;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but
I am now with you.)'¹

Men have mistaken the words of Christ and Buddha. With crude resurrection stories and cruder idols they have tried to bring the Masters nearer, when all the time they were there, waiting for men and women to "be as if they were with them." A little more faith in the true greatness of these pioneers and in the all-embracing grandeur of their love for humanity, and those who read their words, whether in the Sermon on the Mount, the Dhammapada, or *Leaves of Grass*, would be able to realise their presence at all times. Read from this standpoint, Whitman's words on "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" have a new meaning. For are we not all between birth and death crossing a great ferry, "the new-born emerging from gates, and the dying emerging from gates?"

"It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation,
or ever so many generations hence,
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky,
so I felt,

Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was
one of a crowd,

Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river
and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,

Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry
with the swift current, I stood yet was hurried. . . .

"Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good
as looking at you now, for all you cannot see
me? . . .

"Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in
unknown ways be looking upon you."

To those who remain, the "audience interminable," which Whitman sees "projected through time," is left the great task of carrying forward the work begun by the Prophet. He has but outlined the programme. He has always left "the best untold."

"I myself but write one or two indicative words for
the future,

I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry
back in the darkness.

"I am a man who, sauntering along without fully
stopping, turns a casual look upon you and then
averts his face,

Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you."

He warns men of the future against forming a theory or founding a school out of his words :

“ I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.”

It is just as if he were still the leader, always going forward to something better.

“ Toward you all, in America's name,
I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the
signal.

To remain after me in sight forever,
For all the haunts and homes of men.”

He knows well what his work in the world has been. One grand theme, the great Idea of a universal comradeship, has pulsed through all his songs, and he has asked for nought else but to sing these songs.

“ I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised
riches,

I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up
for the stupid and the crazy, devoted my income
and labor to others,

Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had
patience and indulgence toward the people, taken
off my hat to nothing known or unknown,

Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and
with the young, and with the mothers of families,

Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried
them by trees, stars, rivers,

Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or defiled
my body,
Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully
claim'd for others on the same terms."

Such is the record of the life of the Prophet of
the New Era, and he can face the future calmly
and say with confidence :

" I am willing to wait to be understood."

And as the time men call the end approaches,
his faith that it is *not* the end becomes firmer,
and he waits patiently "for what will be ex-
hibited by death." "Content with all," he
knows that

" All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed,
and luckier."

Immortality is the law of life for everything.

" How beautiful and perfect are the animals !
How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon
it !
What is called good is perfect, and what is called
bad is just as perfect,
The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and
the imponderable fluids perfect ;
Slowly and surely they have pass'd on to this, and
slowly and surely they yet pass on.

" I swear I think now that everything without exception has an eternal soul !

The trees have rooted in the ground ! the weeds of the sea have ! the animals !

" I swear I think there is nothing but immortality."

In this spirit does Walt Whitman face the future :

" Perhaps soon some day or night while I am singing my voice will suddenly cease."

And then will come " the exquisite transition of death," the time when he must relinquish those materials of which he has made " temporary use for identity's sake." He remembers his mother, the ideal woman, how she died, and the soldiers of Civil War, South and North, how they died. He thinks of the Mother of All, " pensive on her dead gazing." And all these speak to him of " the triumph of things," and he is ready himself to walk out into " the unknown region." He has sung his song, he has done his work :

" Curious envelop'd messages delivering,
Sparkles hot, seed ethereal down in the dirt dropping,
Myself unknowing, my commission obeying, to question it never daring,
To ages and ages yet the growth of the seed leaving."

Henceforth he will be "a melodious echo," to be remembered for all time, death making him really undying.

He looks to the Great Comrade for strength and assurance :

" Let the old timbers part, I will not part,
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves
buffet me,
Thee, Thee at least to know."

He speaks a final word to those who are to be left behind :

" Dear friend, whoever you are, take this kiss,
I give it especially to you, do not forget me,
I feel like one who has done work for the day to
retire awhile. . . .
Remember my words, I may again return,
I love you."

He utters a strangely comforting promise, something to live for :

" I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for."

And then he sings one last glad song, a vision of the future :

" O glad, exulting, culminating song !
A vigor more than earth's is in my notes,
Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror at last,

Hymns to the universal God from universal man—
all joy !

A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy !
Women and men in wisdom, innocence and health—
all joy !

Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy !
War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged
—nothing but joy left !

The ocean, fill'd with joy—the 'atmosphere all joy !
Joy ! joy ! in freedom, worship, love ! joy in the
ecstasy of life !

Enough to merely be ! enough to breathe !
Joy ! joy ! all over joy ! ”

THE END

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